



# Rover, Racism and Nativism: A Comparison of Eras of Canine Stereotyping Based on Notions of Nationality, Race and Belonging and Impacted by Canine Identity

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Rover, Racism and Nativism:  
A Comparison of Eras of Canine Stereotyping and Discrimination  
Based on Notions of Nationality, Race and Canine Identity

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## Abstract

This thesis examines and compares three eras of canine stereotyping in the United States and Great Britain, during which certain breeds of dogs were associated with, and conflated with, minority groups experiencing social isolation or targeting. As a result of this identification with human minorities, the specific canine breeds examined were then targeted for media and social campaigns, suffering abuse and discrimination. However, the author hypothesizes that canines themselves have a culture and history, and their own change in social status was a factor in the abuse and discrimination that they experienced.

## Dedication

To my girls, Wonder Juniper and Hunny Tuna, you are my inspiration. And to Lonesome George, Collette, and Autumn who will always be part of my life's journey.

## Acknowledgements

I want to thank my favorite sister and constant champion, Brandy, without whose support this work would not have been possible. I thank my parents, Kit and David, who made all things possible, and who taught me the joys of conversation and ideas. And thank you to Jessica Robbins, for being family, along with my big brother Stefan. I draw strength from you all.

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## Limitations

Many topic areas intersect when discussing social change, and direct evidence of such change may not be available. It may be necessary to infer such changes from the collective weight of opinions, individual occurrences, political analysis, and so forth to draw a picture of a subtle social change.

Additionally, I primarily limit my examination to the U.S. and Great Britain. Although many phenomena touched in the research of this topic have played out in other countries, such as animalization, the emergence of the specialized pet dog, and the controversy over pit bulls as a vicious breed, this study focuses on the United States and includes Great Britain as a major cultural influence on the country. The nations share a language and a history and are close cultural allies. Many of the same social concerns and legislation, both for and against the interests of canines, concurred in both countries: such as the rise of animal rights interests, the social elevation of the pet as a member of the family, the rooting out of other animals in the urban environment, black urban blight and contested ownership of pit bulls, and legislation aimed at restricting or eliminating pit bull.

## Definition of Terms<sup>1</sup>

Animalizing	To depict or represent in the form of an animal; a method used to degrade and establish the lower status of minority groups.
Hydrophobia	Older term for rabies.
Nativism	A sociopolitical policy, especially in the United States in the nineteenth century, favoring the interests of established inhabitants over those of immigrants.
Urning	Older term for homosexual or gender variant individual.
Wilding	The act or practice of going about in a group threatening, robbing or attacking others, and in the 1990s, a crime associated by the media with minority juveniles.

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<sup>1</sup> Based on FreeDictionary.com.

## Chapter 1

### Cultural History of Dogs

A review of the cultural history of dogs, examining their historic place in connection to human society and how that place has changed in the past two hundred years, gives context to how dogs have been used against, and in comparison, with minority groups. While this paper focuses on specific instances of canine breed discrimination in relation to targeting of minority groups, the history and the phenomenon of the pet dog gives particular meaning to such use.

#### Introduction

Canines in the West are known today by the description, “Man’s Best Friend,” and are members of approximately 44% of U.S. households and 45% of British households.<sup>2</sup> They are intimates of homes, often holding status as members of the family unit. Yet in recent history, two breeds of dogs have been targets of media and social campaigns which led to discrimination, abuse and sometimes death. The first anti-breed campaign was conducted against dachshunds, who, as dogs of Germanic origin, were the focus of war propaganda during World War I. The second anti-breed campaign was focused on pit bulls, a popular breed in minority communities and one associated with blacks physically and culturally. The anti-pit bull campaign was conducted during the late nineteen-nineties and early two-

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<sup>2</sup> “Share of Households Owning a Pet in the United Kingdom (UK) from 2009 to 2019,” Statista, accessed January 25, 2020, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/308235/estimated-pet-ownership-in-the-united-kingdom-uk/>.

thousands via sensationalized media coverage and government legislative efforts. In both cases, the breeds were associated with minority groups under increased scrutiny, based on tensions of nationalism and/or racism.

What reason would the canine, with its special standing as “man’s best friend,” be chosen as conduits for such racism/nationalism and how did this phenomenon differ from the tradition of animalization of racial or national groups as a tool of oppression? Did the racist association made between black people and pit bulls go beyond animalization of a minority, touching more obscure/hidden dynamics of belonging and alienation, of proper world order and a proper place within that order, not just for minorities but for dogs themselves? Will an examination will find these same dynamics at play in the targeting of pit bulls for breed discrimination and in the anti-dachshund sentiment of World War I? I hypothesize that as the result of the projection of human racism and nationalism onto dogs, dynamics of belonging and place, the isolation of the alien, usually applied as oppressive mechanisms to humans, have also played out in the cultural history of dogs.

### Humans, Animals and Evolved Status

The pseudo-sciences supposedly established a hierarchy of more and less evolved human groups, based on distance from animal origins. Most of these scientific methods sought to prove racial superiority. As noted by Brigitte Felder in “Black Dogs, Blood Hounds and Best Friends African Americans and Dogs in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature,”<sup>3</sup> “According to (historian) Harriet Ritvo, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century

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<sup>3</sup> Brigitte Felder, “Black Dogs, Blood Hounds and Best Friends African Americans and Dogs in Nineteenth-Century Abolitionist Literature,” *American Beasts Perspectives on*

advances in the biological and evolutionary sciences produced new theories of development that categorized races hierarchically according to how far they had evolved from humans' hominid progenitor.”

In response to evolutionary theory, the use of scientific racism, pseudo-sciences that supposedly proved white superiority and non-white (and Irish) proximity to various animals, were popular and widespread. James W. Redfield published his work *Comparative Physiognomy or Resemblances Between Men and Animals*<sup>4</sup> in 1852, which closely examined and made comparisons between different races and various animals, drawing conclusions as to character and moral standing from his findings. His work was a continuation of the pseudo-science of phrenology, which had become popular earlier in the century. Phrenology measured the shape of the skull and used the results to predict mental acuity and criminal tendencies. Thicker or broader skulls such as those attributed to the “negro” race, indicated lesser evolution. Redfield noted broader features, supposedly thicker bones and more muscular physiques, longer arm length and so on to identify more primitive, and primate-like, humans. Those equated by such methodology were blacks, placed at a kind of bottom rung on a ladder of evolutionary development. Other races occupied higher rungs, with European, Anglo-Saxon whites at the top of the ladder. This supported the social, political and economic hierarchy of Western societies.

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*Animals, Animality and U.S. Culture, 1776-1920* (Berlin: Neofelis Verlag GmbH, 2016), 163.

<sup>4</sup> James W. Redfield, *Comparative Physiognomy or Resemblances between Men and Animals* (Clifton Hall, NY: Redfield, 1852).

As noted by Felder, this “racialization of human-animal relationships,” was an attempt to establish a supposedly factual foundation for the position, privilege and world view of the elite. She says, “The nineteenth century saw discourses of race and species that were closely intertwined. Transatlantic discussions of science and pseudo-science produced literature on human and nonhuman taxonomies and natural histories that often conflated race and species categories in their arguments and overwhelming sought to justify global white supremacist of endeavors of imperialism, enslavement, and oppression.”<sup>5</sup>

The use of science to establish racial superiority would have strong influence over the Eugenics craze of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and at the core of Nazi philosophy. The placement of human in groups as “developed,” “proper,” and “decent” was in contrast and conjunction with the animal; the animal was both the starting point, and by notion, the center, of establishing who was more human than the other.

### Housing, Family Membership and Social Markers

Cultural changes of nineteenth century wrought by the new placement of mankind in the cosmology was married with tension over the question of proper placement in the hierarchy of human groups. The increased tension resulted from new work and social relationships due to industrialization, increasing urbanization and an increasing far-reaching global economy born of imperialism and colonialism, with races and nations in closer contact. The question of who was more evolved, who was “proper,” who had membership in society, became vital.

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<sup>5</sup> Felder, “Black Dogs, Blood Hounds and Best Friends,” 173.

In this changed culture, the status of the home became very important. The importance of the home can be found repeatedly in Victorian literature and social commentary, where Victorians associated their own homes with membership in the Empire itself and also as a reflection of the society, with the father as the patriarch and head, the woman and children and servants as subordinate subjects set within a hierarchy of privilege. The home must be set in a “proper” location, with comparable housing and inhabitants, also deemed “proper.” The physicality of the home, its appointment of furniture, equipment, and knick-knacks, were a reflection of the material status of the Empire/Young Nation as well as the individuals within the home. Cleanliness and orderliness, of both site and persons within the site, were constantly emphasized, as was hierarchy and place. Renowned architect Robert Kerr, whose book on proper living, *The Gentlemen’s House; or, How to Plan English Residences from the Parsonage to the Palace*<sup>6</sup> was the premier guide to home life, was a popular guide for proper living that instructed, “Every servant, every operation, every utensil, every fixture, should have a right place, and no right place but one. The family constitutes one community, the staff, another.”

The home became the focus of idealized social relationships and roles. As noted by Alison Blunt and Robin Dowling in their work, “Home,”<sup>7</sup> the home is “both material and imaginative, a site and a set of meanings/emotions.”<sup>8</sup> Home was the mechanism through

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<sup>6</sup> *The Gentleman’s House; or, How to plan English Residences from the Parsonage to the Palace* (London 1864; 3rd expanded edition 1871). Accessed January 11, 2020.

<sup>7</sup> Alison Blunt and Robyn Dowling, *Home*, Key Ideas in Geography (London: Routledge, 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Philip Howell, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2015),13.



which gender and political roles were played out, with the woman of the house symbolizing the home and subordination, and the man of the house symbolizing its head and leadership, mirrored amongst any staff with male servants taking precedence over female ones.

Through the living out of the proper place within the home, individuals became members of society. Among the worst of insults, and crimes, was to be a vagrant. To be one was to be an outsider, an alien, and a potential threat and enemy to decent, insular society. Vagrants were stripped of basic social rights and abused, both in Britain and the U.S. By rule, a habitual vagabond would be determined a “rogue” and criminalized. From the Vagabond Acts of the sixteenth century, a “rogue” was a person who “had no land, no master, and no legitimate trade or source of income.”<sup>9</sup> Punishments under the Acts included whipping, the cutting off or branding of ears, or execution. Noted Karl Marx in *Das Kapital (Capital)*: “Any one wandering about and begging is declared rogue and a vagabond. Justices of the peace in petty session are authorized to have them publicly whipped and for the first offence to imprison them for 6 months, for the second for 2 years. While in prison they are to be whipped as much and as often as the justices think fit.... rogues are to be branded with an R on the left shoulder and set to hard labor, and if they are caught begging again, to be executed without mercy.”<sup>10</sup> Such punishments were in force until the eighteenth century. The stigma of vagrancy remained.

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<sup>9</sup> “Vagabonds Acts 1572,” Last modified November 13, 2018, [En.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vagabonds\\_Acts\\_1572](http://En.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vagabonds_Acts_1572).

<sup>10</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, vol, 1(England: Penguin Books, 2010), 523.

The use of animalized stereotypes of the Irish, shows the importance of social markers such as housing in determining citizenship/membership status. The housing of the Irish was a particular focus for Irish critics. Like blacks, the Irish had been targeted for animalization. In his book, *How the Irish Became White*,<sup>11</sup> author Noel Ignatiev examines the use of caricature and cartooning against the Irish—where they were often compared to other races, but also animalized as apes, as dogs, and increasingly common as the nineteenth century wore on, as pigs. The latter animal in particular was symbolic due to its housing: the sty, which played on the status of proper housing.

The opposite of the Victorian idealized home was a sty, a contrast to purity, cleanliness and orderliness. The Irish were portrayed as dirt-loving and on equal basis with the pigs they kept. Stated the James Redfield the practitioner of physiognomy: “Among the Irish, the commonality take to dirt-digging more naturally than to anything else,” adding, “They are dirty in their persons, and admit pigs in their mud-cabins which they themselves occupy.” With the association with porcine “muck” and dirty sties, the implication of Irish pigliness was that they lacked respectable homes, living in the mire like animals, and therefore lacked common decency and full status as human beings, in conjunction with the idea that a “real” home is ordered and disciplined and clean in contrast to the animal world of poor households.

### Zoning of Animals

As part of the same urge to differentiate proper humans from animals, and animal-like people, was the gradual removal of animals in general from the human environment. Animals

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<sup>11</sup> Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (London Routledge, 1995).

were common in urban settings from fowl and cows, working animals such as cart dogs and horses, and non-working animals scavenging off human settlements. As noted by Philip Howell in his study of the concept of pet ownership, animals and strays, *At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain*, numerous laws were gradually passed through the nineteenth century and early twentieth century to enforce zoning of various animals out of cities and towns, and to specified areas, specifically out of the human sphere. That sphere was thus purified of its animal content of dirt, germs, disease and under-evolved beings. Notes Howell, “Some have traced this attempt to *purify* the human world of the pollution of animality to Cartesian rationalism and/or Enlightenment science in the West, if not to even longer-term histories: The exclusion of animals and the animal can be said to follow “a more general logic and desire for classification and control of the non-human world.” He notes of this change in animal geography, “The most prominent, if not always the most considered, geographical themes here are those of exclusion, marginalization, and enclosure. By “exclusion” is meant the expulsion of the animal from the human world, both conceptually and practically; the construction of cities and societies where, it is said, animals and “the animal” have been removed and purged, either wholly or in part.”<sup>12</sup>

Animals became in part conceptual, as real-life contact with them became an increasing rarity, except as pets or unwanted pests such as rodents and snakes. Says Akira Mizuta Lippitt in the study, *Electric Animal*: “Modernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity’s habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity’s reflection on itself.”<sup>13</sup> Animals were becoming in part conceptual for humans, a new creation

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<sup>12</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 6.

of animals to human needs, desires and ends. As noted by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert in their work, *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places*, animal geography is meant “to discern the many ways in which animals are ‘placed’ by human societies in their local material spaces (settlements, fields, farms, factories and so on) as well as in a host of imaginary, literary, psychological and even virtual spaces.”<sup>14</sup> The home was now a virtual space of sorts, and into it was welcomed the exception to expulsion of animals from the human sphere: the pet dog.

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<sup>13</sup> Akira Mizuta Lippitt, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 2.

<sup>14</sup> Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, eds., *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations* (London: Routledge, 2000), 5.

## Chapter 2

### The Creation of the Victorian Pet Dog

As other animals were removed from daily life, the fancy of owning dogs as companions and expensive hobbies became increasingly popular. Working dogs were removed from the streets, their vocations as cart dogs banned, their use as herders, retrievers, etc. now circumscribed to specific areas. Loose dogs were unsanctioned. It was the pet dog that was made an exception to the zoning of animals to out-of-sight locales; instead these dogs were brought into the home physically, as well into the idealized Home and family of Victorian-era society. The new role of pet dog differed from its forerunner, the lap dog, and from the previous dog of the home, guard dog, both of whom served different functions then establishment of domesticity.

#### Lap Dogs

This process was a gradual one, and the pet dog's forerunner was the lap dog of the wealthy. There are distinctions between the status of the two, however. Lap dogs became increasingly popular from the late seventeenth/early eighteenth centuries, when they entered the wealthy homes as accessories and consumer status symbols for the social elite, primarily upper-class women. Lap dogs with special features, such as fringes, curled tails, or large

eyes, were prized and traded.<sup>15</sup> They might be bred or dyed to match clothing or dressed to compliment a certain style or for humor.<sup>16</sup> They could also be cherished companions and loved by their owners. However, they remained seen as strictly animals. There was no social consensus on special treatment or any forms of legal protection for them. Such dogs might be, and were often, simply abandoned if they no longer suited an owner's whims (or even killed).<sup>17</sup> As with all animals, lap dogs had no place in the environment outside of human whims and, notably, they remained degraded beings. Thus, the use of dogs for racializing remained popular. The nineteenth century would see the canine role continue to develop and enlarge, and for clarity's sake we will call the household canine the pet dog.

The pet dog was a new phenomenon, separate from lap dogs and the long history of dogs as workers and service providers. The Victorian pet dog was an animal class which, by definition, could not be a working dog, and did not provide services to humans. Says Howell, "In this regard, pet animals were not supposed to be supplementary workers in the household, as they might want to have been. By and large, the only work that the pet dog was assigned was the cultural work of embodying and securing the home<sup>18</sup>." Pet dogs thus secured the

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<sup>15</sup> "Lap Dog," Wikipedia, edited December 17, 2019, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lap\\_dog](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lap_dog).

<sup>16</sup> See Kathleen Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Pet Keeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> As noted in *At Home and Astray*, the Battersea Home for Dogs, the first dog shelter in the West, serviced dogs who had, in the words of the Home's secretary James Johnson, "strayed from home or who have been banished by cruel and unfeeling masters." Johnson cautioned, "The Committee are anxious to impress upon the public the fact that this institution is not intended to be a permanent home for old and worn out favourites...." Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 74 and 78.

<sup>18</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 16.

sanctity of the idealized household rather than the physical house itself. This differed from the figure of the working guard dog, often relegated to the public spaces of the house such as the yard, who was valued for the ability to fulfill a utilitarian need and thus for size, bite, aggression and menacing appearance.

### Guard Dogs

In comparison to the guard dog, pet dogs were often valued for beauty and cuddliness, and smaller sized pet dogs were popular. However, in the gradual shift towards the umbrella definition of dogs as pets, even in the mid-nineteenth century created controversy over when a dog could be deemed just a guard dog or when it became a pet. This distinction was material in France, which imposed a tax on “luxury” dogs (i.e., in the tradition of lap dogs as upper-class, mostly female, fancies). The legal basis established by the French tax authorities rested on the dog’s use, and its place in the home and its place within the household. States Kathleen Kete in her work, *The Beast in the Boudoir: Petkeeping in Nineteenth-Century Paris*: “A dog was a pet rather than a worker if it accompanied its master on walks, if it was allowed to wander freely within a home, or if it was allowed to play with children.” A dog “habitually confined in a house that was situated in a built up area of a city, when that house is enclosed on all sides and when it contains neither large store or shop” was a pet, as was the dog “of small size that by its nature cannot be understood as being intended exclusively to guard a house.” The function of use of the home was critical, and Kete notes, a dog would be considered a taxable pet if it “though serving as a guard dog (and) is also admitted inside apartments or offices.”<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 45.

The status of the working dog was based strictly on utility, and the law found that "a dog must be deemed a pet if its state of health or age rendered it useless." Kete notes: "A guard dog wasn't allowed to grow old."<sup>20</sup> But as sentimentality around canines grew, so did the mandate that dogs were part of the household, and the intersection between the historic role of guard dog and the new role of pet meant that more dogs were being treated as pets as the nineteenth century progressed.

But pet fancy did change canine breeds in favor of features that made them less utilitarian and more appealing. Breeds of dogs that were demonstrably limited by stature or features that rendered them less able, such as bull dogs with their flat faces and muscle-bound legs, would eventually result from breeding for qualities that made them "cute" and benign, the opposite of a guard dog profile. Instead they were celebrated as companions for children, as in the case of the dachshund. As noted by Howell in *At Home and Astray*, the pet dog was often seen as a vulnerable heel of the bourgeois household, a target of dognapping and ransom demands, which was a problem in the nineteenth century.<sup>21</sup> On par with children, such dogs were stereotyped as innocent, cute and childlike. That the dog was dependent on his/her owner, the way a child is dependent on his/her parent, meant the bond was not simply terminated when the dog no longer physically useful. The pet dog was instead a resident of the household whose presence signified social mores and prosperity. States Philip M. Teigen in his study of the rabies crisis of the late Eighteen-Hundreds, "Legislating Fear and the Public Health in Gilded Age Massachusetts":

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<sup>20</sup> Kete, *The Beast in the Boudoir*, 47.

<sup>21</sup> See Howell's study on dog theft, "Flush and the Banditti: Dog Stealing in Victorian London," *At Home and Astray*, 50-72.



“Turn-of-the-century economist and social critic Thorsten Veblen dwelt on dogs and their place in the emerging consumer culture in his 1899 classic, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. Useless for work, but costly to buy and maintain, he noted, canine value resided in what the species contributed to the construction of middle class “repute”(social identity). The dog, he said, “commends himself to our favour by affording play to our propensity for mastery, and as he is also an item of expense, and commonly serves no industrial purpose, he holds a well-assured place in men's regard as a thing of good repute.”<sup>22</sup>

### Pet Dogs as Intimates of the Home

Critically, instead of being defined by utility, the pet dog was defined as an intimate of the home. In the words of Samuel Beeton, publisher of the popular “Englishwoman’s Domestic Magazine”, “As regards the creature now under consideration, however, he claims the right to the title of Home Pet, – nay, as something infinitely more dignified, – as Home friend and protector.”<sup>23</sup> In what has been described by Howell as the “imagined geography of domestication”<sup>24</sup>, the dog was almost a component of the creation of a perfect idealized home life.

The pet dog was also defined as part of the family. The family’s hierarchical structure, mirroring patriarchal institutions, included relations of power, discipline and subordination not just between family and pets, but between family members, as examined in the studies of Yi-Fu Tuan on the making of pets.<sup>25</sup> The pet dog’s place was near the bottom

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<sup>22</sup> Philip M. Teigen, “Legislating Fear and the Public Health in Gilded Age Massachusetts,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 62, no. 2 (April 2007): 166.

<sup>23</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 16.

<sup>24</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Yi-Fu Tuan, *Dominance and Affection: The Making of Pets* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

of the ladder, and so sometimes equated with the least powerful members of the nuclear family: the children.

“There are important parallels,” notes Phillips, “for instance, between the ways in which dogs and children were treated, for homes were places where dogs, like children, should ideally be cared for without reference to economic value. Both are precious, sentimental investments in “the emotional order of domesticity “constructed by 19th-century middle-class culture.”<sup>26</sup>

This position of familial intimacy gave the dog the status of near-human. The home was a sanctuary from dirt and outside influences, and a marker of citizenship and belonging. The dog’s placement within the home marked a change in status, one elevated as close to human status as any animal might attain. Notes Howell, “And here, the question of home is fundamental, as the central imagined and material site where animals like the pet dog are domesticated, that class of animals, that in the words of (nineteenth century animal activist) Henry Salt, ‘who have become still more associated with mankind for being inmates of their homes.’”<sup>27</sup> Dogs as companions traveled the sidewalks and traversed the neighborhoods. It was a position that made some citizens uncomfortable and led to calls for restriction and regulation.

#### Rules of Exception for Pet Dogs

As pet dogs became more popular and numerous, there were increasing concerns about the animal’s proximity and status. The response was to subject kept dogs to regulation; in fulfilling those regulations, dogs could be deemed pets, could be given the status of near-

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<sup>26</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 13.

human, and could claim some of the same markers of social place as humans. The first such regulation was a home. To be a pet, a dog had to be contained on privately owned or leased property; if kept in a yard, the dog to be enclosed in private space by use of a barrier. As Howell noted, “Finally, where animals have remained a part of human societies, they have been enclosed in a variety of carefully controlled, thoroughly human-dominated spaces.”<sup>28</sup> When outside of a home and the yard attached to it, the dog was required to be under human command, often by use a leash, to be restrained but also to indicate ownership (and subordination to a household member). The dog also required a license, a tax upon his or her person, usually publicly indicated in the wearing of a tag that served as proof of ownership and homed status. With pet status established, such dogs had many of the same markers that humans held; membership in a proper household, a proper home. Arguably they had status as a tax paid member of society, and, as the pet product and services sector continued to grow, as a consumer, although they themselves were consumable commodities. The phenomenon of pets was in its early stages in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, and dogs remained defined by the desires of human beings.

#### Obligations and Social Ties to Dogs and Other Lower Beings

The use of the dog to establish the ideal household aligned with the increasing view of proper animal order, hierarchy and use, modeled on Christian patriarchy. Social reform movements reflected an emerging ethic based on a sense of obligation and social ties to lower beings, and reflected a view of Christian cosmology where animals, especially domesticated animals, not only belonged to Man, but were his childlike charges. This moral

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<sup>28</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 7.

obligation was cited in the first efforts at creating anti-cruelty laws in Regency Britain. Stated Lord Erskine to the House of Peers in 1809, of the obligations of “Man, with his Godlike faculties”:

“From the moral sense of the Parent re–animated, or rather in this branch created by the law, the next generation will feel, and the first dawn of their ideas, the august relation they stand into the Lower World, and the trust which their station in the universe imposes on them.”<sup>29</sup>

The proper treatment of animals was thus part of the creation of a whole Christian society, one based on social hierarchy, cohesiveness, proper behavior and higher, more evolved religious and civic sentiment.<sup>30</sup> The term “Man” itself indicated a human hierarchy of privileged white men at the top of society, women and lower classes and people of color stationed beneath, and it follows that the leadership of animal treatment reform were upper-class men self-appointed as creators of such a society. With the aim to establish norms for animal use/treatment and create social censure and laws to enforce them, these men established The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1824 (renamed with royal permission The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals in 1840). This society was self-identified as rational (thus higher on the evolutionary ladder) and Christian;

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<sup>29</sup> Lord Erskine, *The Speech of Lord Erskine in the House of Peers, on the Second Reading of the Bill for Preventing Malicious and Wanton Cruelty to Animals* (London: Richard Philips, 1809), 28.

<sup>30</sup> As Lord Erskine detailed in his speech to the House of Peers, “Add to this, my Lord, that the justice and tenderest consideration of this benevolent system of nature is not only consistent with the fullest domination of men over the lower world, but establishes and improves it. In this as an everything else, the whole moral system is in cultivated by the pursuit of our own happiness.” Lord Erskine, *The Speech of Lord Erskine*, 4.

it promoted proper animal treatment as a Christian ethic and a signifier of rational, i.e. “proper” and civilized behavior.

As noted in an essay writing contest they sponsored in 1837 to influence public attitudes towards animal treatment, “The Essay required is one which shall morally illustrate, and religiously enforce, the obligation of man towards the inferior and dependent creatures-- their protection and security from abuse...” and that it should be “harmonious with the spirit and doctrines of Christianity, and the duty of man as a rational and accountable creature.”<sup>31</sup> Such campaigns emphasized animals as lower beings in the hierarchy, but the issue of dog treatment was especially contentious due to the increasing intimacy of dogs within society itself. Sentimentalized treatment of dogs reflected the canine’s special place within this tightly defined/controlled Christian cosmology. Exceptions to this sentimentalized treatment are therefore notable, and, as the anti-cruelty movement itself, reflects politics, issues of hierarchy and notions of citizenship/belonging.

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<sup>31</sup> As outlined in David Mushet, *The Wrongs of the Animal World* (London: Hatchard, 1839), xii.

## Chapter 3

### Breed Campaign against the Spitz: Spector of Foreignness

The dog's place in the home and within human society could be challenged on a breed basis during times of social stress. When canines, with their near-human status, were used as substitutes or equated with targeted minority human populations, the backlash against them reflected not only their use/abuse as an outlet for hostility to minorities but also the underlying unease with questions of improper placement, belonging and non-belonging, and membership in society. Questions that underlay the perception of outsiders, racial and national, could be found in debates about dogs. By examining campaigns targeting German dogs in the years before and after WWI, we find that targeted breeds were institutionally equated to alien elements and categorized as active menaces to society.

#### The Spitz and the "Mad Dog Scare"

The first health campaign involving canines in the era of pets was the "Mad Dog Scare" of the late nineteenth century, which focused on the spitz breed and the spread of rabies. The spitz is not one breed, but a type of dog springing from a common ancestor and bred into a number of varieties, from the Akita to the Mittel Spitz. The spitz that Victorians were most familiar with was a smaller lap dog, either the German Spitz or a hybrid of it, like the Pomeranian, which served as a companion for children and women of the house. As

noted by Teigen in “Legislating Fear and the Public Health in Gilded Age Massachusetts,” the new role of pet dogs was reflected in popular sentiment:

“The prevailing understanding of dogs as predators ebbed in the last quarter of the century, replaced by the ideal of dogs as family members and intimate companions (Figures 3 and 4). Snapshots, portraits, pictures in books and magazines, stories about the moral or family values of dogs, and the success of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, all illustrate the revaluation of dogs. The proliferation of dog shows in the 1870s, the widespread interest in breeding, buying, and importing purebred dogs are further indications of a cultural change.”<sup>32</sup>

However, in the midst of an increase in mortal rabies infections and public fear, questions of the dog’s place in society came to the fore. Teigen notes: “Moreover, for victims and nonvictims alike, the virus, with its ability to cross the animal–human boundary, created further anxiety by undermining clear distinctions between humans and animals. Finally, the disease signaled social dislocation. Since most nineteenth-century hydrophobia was communicated by dogs, and since canines as a species were and are defined by their social relationships with humans, dogs that bit humans disrupted the sometimes pragmatic but almost always emotional human–dog relationships.”<sup>33</sup> Teigen quotes George Fleming, an English veterinarian of the time:

“And what renders the story of this malady still more sad and alarming is the fact, that it is generally derived from the most faithful and numerous of our domestic pets and servants—the dog—whose attachment to—I had almost said “veneration” for—man brings this animal at all times and everywhere to share his company, to join with him in sport, pastime, toil or hardship, and whose motto justly deserves to be *semper fidelis*.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Teigen, “Legislating Fear,” 164.

<sup>33</sup> Teigen, “Legislating Fear,” 146.

As noted by Stephanie Howard-Smith in her article, “Mad Dogs, Sad Dogs, and the ‘War Against Curs’”<sup>35</sup> an examination of the mass extermination of dogs in London in 1760 in response to rabies, culling of dogs was common throughout Europe, especially during epidemics. Mass extermination of dogs in London are documented in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in response to disease outbreak. These dogs were undifferentiated by breed or type, and often whether owned or not. By the nineteenth century, there were qualms about such killings of “man’s best friend,” which would continue to grow as dog ownership became increasingly common and a mark of social standing and proper home life. However, fear of rabies meant outbreaks resulted in culling, often focusing on dogs that appeared ownerless and homeless, and not appropriately contained.

#### Spitz as an Unevolved Element and the Spector of Race

What differentiated the Mad Dog Scare of late nineteenth century was the focus on one breed in particular as a carrier of the virus, and the use of pseudo-science to back notions of an innately dangerous “race” of canine, one that had been allowed intimate social access. Notes Teigen of the spitz, a popular mid-sized lap dog of Germanic origin, “This long-haired dog with erect ears and tail curled over its back—a favorite with Gilded Age women and children... played a central role in nineteenth-century debates over dog bites and hydrophobia throughout the United States. Its apparent susceptibility to rabies, many

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<sup>34</sup> Teigen, “Legislating Fear,” 146.

<sup>35</sup> Stephanie Howard-Smith, “Mad Dogs, Sad Dogs and the ‘War against Curs’ in London 1760,” *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 42, no. 1 (2019): 101-118.



believed, derived from its ancestral tie to the wolf.”<sup>36</sup> The unsubstantiated theory of the spitz breed’s closer proximity to its unevolved, wild origins, the wolf, is an echo of the pseudo-science in use to confirm human and animal place on the evolutionary ladder. The breed’s baser origins were confirmed for some in the its supposed excitability, unprovoked aggression, and unpredictability. The spitz was deemed not only to have more poisonous saliva, but to have an innate nature that made it untrustworthy and dangerous, regardless of health status. As reported in the magazine, *The Manufacturer and Builder*, in 1877: “Why the Spitz dog is the most dangerous of all, is because it is well established and recognized fact that the closer related domestic animals are to wild ones of the same clans or family the greater the danger to be dreaded from wounds inflicted by them.” The writer than adds, “No trust or dependence can be placed upon this breed, for it is impossible to tell at what moment they will turn upon their keepers and betray their origin by a savage attack.”<sup>37</sup>

Respected medical authorities backed the pseudo-science of the anti-spitz mania.

Noted veterinarian and author Francis Butler, in his work *Breeding, Training, Management, Diseases of Dogs*, stated:

“Ex-Surgeon General of the Army, Dr. Wm. A. Hammond, who is regarded as one of the most eminent authorities on nervous diseases in this country, gives his views on hydrophobia, which is now conceded to be a nervous disease. The Doctor concurs in the dangerous nature of the Spitz dog, and considers theory of the harm-lessness of the Spitz absurd. He says Spitz dogs are more prone to excite hydrophobia in the human system than any other breed of dogs he knows of, and pronounces the Spitz a cross between the Pomeranian hound and the Arctic fox All hybrids are bad.”

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<sup>36</sup> Teigen, “Legislating Fear,” 149.

<sup>37</sup> “Hydrophobia,” *Manufacturer and Builder* 9, no. 8 (August 1877): 177.

Butler adds, “Until more comprehensive investigation settles the question, we are justified in assuming from our present experience that the saliva of the Spitz dog is more uniformly poisonous than that of any other dog, and experience teaches that the saliva of a dog not suffering from rabies may be poisonous under certain conditions when the dog is in a state of anger or fury or merely in a condition of excitement. Dr. Hammond says the Spitz is absolutely of no use, and in a matter involving precious lives, it is better to be on the safe side. Nothing would be lost by exterminating the Spitz.”<sup>38</sup>

Some areas instigated stricter leashing, muzzling, insurance, and licensing policies specifically for spitzes. In areas where dire warnings by medical specialists and sensational media coverage, such as the *New York Times* headline, “Death From Hydrophobia.: The Spitz Dog Performs Fatal Work Once More”<sup>39</sup> caused panic, spitzes were euthanized by their owners or abandoned to the streets, to be rounded up for extermination by local animal control, or worse fates. Incidents of the breed being targeted for mob violence, chased and shot on the street by the police, and causing public melees occurred. Genuine panic over formerly cherished pets resulted when the dog was revealed to be not a trustworthy intimate of the home but as a threat and a contagion. The controversy brought to the fore tensions over canine’s newly elevated status and its place within the home and the neighborhood were questioned. Notes Howell:

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<sup>38</sup> Francis Butler, *Breeding, Training, Management, Diseases of Dogs: Together with an Easy and Agreeable Method of Instructing all Breeds of Dogs in a Great Variety of Amusing and Useful Performances* (Brooklyn: D. S. Holmes, 1877).

<sup>39</sup> “Death from Hydrophobia.: The Spitz Dog Performs Fatal Work Once More,” *New York Times*, October 5, 1884, 3. <https://www.nytimes.com/1884/10/05/archives/death-from-hydrophobia-the-spitz-dog-performs-fatal-work-once-more.html>.

“But rabies was also imaginatively linked to the rise of the bourgeois pet keeping: in threatening to replace domestic propriety with dirt, disorderliness, and depravity, nineteenth-century rabies phobia “shattered the myth of the bourgeois interior.”<sup>40</sup>

The disruption caused by the specter of rabies revealed many underlying dynamics around canines in the nineteenth century: tensions about the place of canines in human society and their near-human status; fear of the threat of contagion by unevolved elements, the allowing of parasitic and possible dangerous others into good society. Many of these tensions echoed those with minority communities. As a near-human, canines were party to many of the dynamics at play in the racialization of minority groups. Notions of evolved/unevolved to differentiate good citizens from others of a certain background; the identification of supposed “innate” characteristics, often using pseudo-science, marking a whole group as dangerous; widespread, biased media reporting to emphasize infractions by individuals of a targeted group as justification of wholesale measures against the entire group.

As Felder observes in “Black Dogs Blood Hounds and Best Friends,” of “the racialization of human-animal relationships” that “The nineteenth century saw discourses of race and species that were closely intertwined. Transatlantic discussions of science and pseudo-science produced literature on human and nonhuman taxonomies and natural histories that often conflated race and species categories in their arguments and overwhelming sought to justify global white supremacist of endeavors of imperialism, enslavement, and oppression.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Howell, *At Home and Astray*, 19.

<sup>41</sup> Felder, “Black Dogs Blood Hounds and Best Friends,” 173.

### Anti-German Immigrant Tensions during the “Mad Dog Scare”

Parallels in the ideology and tactics of racism, nativism and othering of minorities, can be found the treatment of canines, especially when based on breed. The spitz breed as conduit for xenophobic tensions and for racist and nativist sentiment can be considered in light of the rise of Anti-German activism from the mid-nineteenth century onward, a period when the specter of immigrant hoards also threatened the “myth of the bourgeois interior,” with the interior being the American heartland and the sanctity of the American home, led to similar allusions to “dirt, disorderliness, and depravity” and immigrants in the media. This period marked the increase of German immigrants to the U.S., largest immigration wave the U.S. had seen. In 1843, the first meetings of the Know-Nothing secret societies were conducted, anti-Catholic societies which focused on conspiracy theories involving papal authority and new Irish and German immigrants.

Although the Irish were also targets of the Know-Nothing movement, Germans were the focus of the movement for their supposed political machinations, and in reaction to the growth of intact German enclaves which built their own institutions such as banks, newspapers and churches and used the German language. Also, because of their sheer numbers, which caused labor unease. the Know-Nothing societies would grow to an open political movement, fronted by the American Party, and increasing tension and violence by “native” Anglos towards Germans. This anti-German sentiment was marked by violence during the election period of 1855, which saw mob violence and killings.

In the Cincinnati Riots, nativists angry over a growing German presence and their voting power, attacked a German neighborhood. “Anti-German sentiment led to the

Cincinnati riots of 1855, in which a Nativist mob tried to invade the German neighborhood. The Germans, organized into armed militia units, constructed a barricade across Vine Street and were able to successfully repel the mob after three days of fighting.”<sup>42</sup> In Louisville that year, the infamous “Bloody Monday” riots resulted in twenty-three deaths. Nativists attacked a large German neighborhood, beating people and setting buildings alight. The conflict was over the fate of elections of anti-immigrant politicians, but the general racist basis of the riots can be seen in its progression from the targeting of first German, then Irish, and then black neighborhoods. The riots marked the peak of violence against Germans, with the Know-Nothing party disintegrating in the 1860s, replaced with a weaker American Protection Association in the 1890s. However, the open growth of anti-German sentiment in the United States, and in Britain, made dogs of Germanic breeds vulnerable members of society.

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<sup>42</sup> “The German Ohioans Bloody Monday,” Ohio History Central, accessed November 12, 2019, [http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/German\\_OhioansBloody\\_Monday](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/German_OhioansBloody_Monday).

## Chapter 4

### Breed Discrimination against the Dachshund: Enemy Dogs in World War I Propaganda Campaign

The position of another Germanic breed, the dachshund, altered radically in the U.S. and Great Britain during World War I, in what looks, upon first examination, to be use of a canine as a minority proxy. Dachshunds served as a target of the first modern war propaganda campaign, symbolizing Germany and the Kaiser. The stress of World War I had led to rise in nativist activism and jingoism, purposely exacerbated and directed by the burgeoning use of organized media, led by government authorities and supportive media heads with the intention to rouse support for the war and provide directives for the civilian population. A war propaganda machine produced posters and adverts, provided news copy and radio content. Other media and the entertainment industry followed suit, generating a homogenous message and a mood that provided little room for dissent.

Previous to the campaign, the dachshund had been a popular breed for the home. Known for its almost comically elongated torso and short legs, which limited mobility, the dachshund was a small to mid-sized benign breed especially favored as a family pet.<sup>43</sup> The outbreak of anti-dachshund sentiment was created and fanned by war propaganda which used

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<sup>43</sup> Queen Victoria and her husband Prince Albert had numerous dachshunds and helped to popularize the breed as a family pet. Victoria is quoted as saying, “Nothing will turn a man’s home into a castle more quickly and effectively than a dachshund,” Kate MacDougall, “Dachshunds, the undisputed kings of their castles, no matter the size (or species) of the other residents,” *Country Life*, May 15, 2019. Accessed January 25, 2020.

the breed's name and image as a euphemism for the Germany and the Kaiser and promoted the idea of using the breed as a stand-in for the enemy; media heaped abuse upon the dachshund and images of the dogs being strangled, crushed, kicked, beaten, chased by citizens or arrested by the police abounded in print newspapers and posters. Where the propaganda producers left off, other media producers picked up, and comics, newspaper shorts and magazine ads produced works targeting the dog as the enemy, ridiculing the breed and advocating that they be socially rejected. Influenced by the tone of the media, stories of dachshunds being abused, abandoned and killed were reported. After the launch of the first enlistment posters which portrayed the dachshund as the enemy, the Ohio paper, the *Jasper Weekly Courier* announced: "Exit the German Dachshund: Marine Poster Causes German Dog to Be Driven from Streets of Cincinnati," and continued:

"Since the appearance of the poster the local dachshunds, of which there are a great number, have led a miserable existence, as small boys have 'sicked' bulldogs, terriers, hounds and every other canine breed on the poor 'Fritzles,' until at last they have been virtually driven off the streets of Cincinnati."<sup>44</sup>

Dachshunds and their owners were subjected to physical assault on the streets and the breed was abandoned in large numbers. As recounted by author Graham Greene in his recollections of his schoolboy experiences in Hertfordshire during the war, a dachshund was stoned in the street.<sup>45</sup> Stonings and attacks were reported in the papers. Subjecting dachshunds to abuse became an outlet for mob fervor. As noted in a history of Columbus, Ohio, during a renaming ceremony for the main park from a German name to an Anglo one,

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<sup>44</sup> "Exit the German Dachshund: Marine Poster Causes German Dog to Be Driven from Streets of Cincinnati," *Jasper Weekly Courier*, August 30, 1918, 2.

<sup>45</sup> Graham Greene, *A Sort of Life* (London: Bodley Head, 1971), 66.

killing of dachshunds on stage was part of the entertainment, a kind of public execution of enemy aliens: “Residents celebrated renaming Schiller Park to Washington Park by killing a large number of Dachshunds and throwing their bodies into a pit.”<sup>46</sup> The group of dogs were shot, and their corpses were set on fire for public viewing.

### Dachshunds as Pets and Enemy Neighbors

The use of the dachshund against Germans may be interpreted as traditional animalizing. However, although the dachshund’s obvious role in the war propaganda campaign was as a symbol of Germany and of the Kaiser, at a deeper level the breed’s use can also be examined through the lens of canines’ special standing within the human community, as near-humans. The reaction to the anti-dachshund campaign might be based on more than that of a stand in for Germany or its leader. The use of a canine, animals who were suitable as human companions and intimates, who held their own social markers and whose membership in the family was considered symbolic of a “complete” and “proper” home, for a campaign about foreign enemies had meanings other than direct racialization or degradation of humans associated with them.

Examining the historic use of animal bodies and animal stereotypes in stereotyping minorities, the purpose of was to otherize a target minority through equation of humans with degraded and lower beings. The use of cartooning in the West is an example of such a tool, with cartooning used as a method to lampoon, ridicule, and construct an understanding of the proper geography of lower peoples, either by class, race or nationality. In Britain, note

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<sup>46</sup> Katharine Moore, *Schiller Park Across Time: Celebrating 150 Years* (Brookfield, MO: Donning, 2017); “America’s Complicated Relationship with the ‘Hot Dog’ Dog,” Greg Bailey, 10/02/2017, [www.realclearhistory.com/articles/2017/10/02/americas](http://www.realclearhistory.com/articles/2017/10/02/americas).



authors Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó, the use of such cartoons often targeted colonial subjects, and was widespread from earliest colonial times. In their book *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture*, they state, “A characteristic by-product of stadial development theory is the animalized racial stereotype, which the British press featured abundantly in writings and cartoons about its colonies.”<sup>47</sup>

“The simian was invoked most often to convey Ireland’s evolutionary loneliness and to justify colonization, as L Perry Curtis has shown, but the pig also appeared in Victorian racial cartoons and became increasingly popular in the 20th century, eventually replacing the simian. The pig offered a flexible alternative to the purely brutish simian: it could reference primitiveness but also facilitated a critique of Irish consumption, laziness, intractability, and squalor.”

The use of cartoons, and other media, for lampooning and the targeting of minorities, aliens, or other enemies, arrived in the Americas as a tradition from Britain. Again, the purpose was the use of animals as embodiments of lower beings/social standing and then equating targeted outsider groups, was part of a widespread process of “othering” minorities with animal stereotyping. Yet the emphasis was that the animals used, simians, pigs, and at that time, dogs, were beings of degraded status, and the degradation, the association with filth or wildness or brutishness, was the source of such media’s power. Although traditional use of cartooning also had a social/political agenda as with WWI propaganda, use of canines in WWI propaganda had undertones not existent in colonial cartooning. The dachshund was not wild, dirty or brutish, or even threatening. The breed was an intimate of the home. Its crime was not in being an animal, but in being a near-human, one with social markers and standing, but through a new social narrative via propaganda, now with the suspected status of alien or

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<sup>47</sup> Kathryn Kirkpatrick and Borbála Faragó, *Animals in Irish Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 63.

even alien enemy. I posit that during the anti-dachshund fervor of WWI, the breed was often equated with German-Americans, rather than Germans abroad, who were now being seen as enemies within the midst of good and proper society. Both the breed and the nationality had enjoyed membership in society and were now exposed as malignant outsiders.

### Ethnic German-Americans as Enemy Neighbors

The use of the dachshund, whether intentional by the architects of the war propaganda campaign or not, spoke to fears over the alien and unassimilated status of Germans in the heartland of America. War propaganda was a new phenomenon, and its power became quickly evident. Where propaganda used stereotypes and exploited already-existing bias, it was more powerful than even its creators expected – mob actions, intimidation and threats of lynching against Germans occurred throughout the country. Notably the target of anti-German sentiment was not only focused on Germany and its citizens, but on American citizens as well, those of German descent who remained ethnically German.

As explored by John E. Kleber in his work on Germans in Louisville, KY, Germans in the U.S. had been slow to assimilate to an all-American identity. Says Kleber in his work on Germans in Louisville, the city had a “rich, concentrated German life,” a life, “typical of the German propensity to remain apart.”<sup>48</sup> Germans were gathered in ethnic enclaves, which kept their own language, media, churches, social clubs, small businesses and banks. Continues Kleber: “All of this created an impression among the native-born Americans that Germans not only did not want to be assimilated but perhaps could not be.” Large portions of

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<sup>48</sup> John E. Kleber, “Anti-German Sentiment during the World Wars,” *Germans in Louisville: A History* (History Press, 2015), 28.

the German population remained connected to their ethnic identity and would be accused of being holdouts from assimilation.

Notes Kleber, this ethnic identity increased suspicion and hostility towards German-Americans, when their patriotism came to be suspect with the beginning of World War I, when increasing anti-alien hysteria made standing outside of society dangerous. He says: “Anti-German attitudes took a more ominous turn. As early as 1914 there was pressure on (German) immigrants to “Americanize.” Now the cry was, “100% Americanism.”<sup>49</sup> The role of propaganda in anti-German sentiment was noted at the time. Noted at the time by Professor Hugo Munsterberg of Harvard, a German national who is considered the founder of the field of applied psychology, the use of coordinated media to distort the news had a powerful effect on the masses that overcame logic. His 1914 book, *The War and America*, noted the dynamic between the editorial agenda and feeding the masses’ bias and fear:

“This at once gave to public opinion a vivid impulse against Germany, and this first impulse of the crowd work havoc in the editorial rooms. The newspapers, always eager to cater to the appetite of the masses, wanted to serve this new anti— German instinct. The result has been that they have not only re-produced the colored news but exaggerated it’s one - sidedness and have become more Catholic than the pope. Every hateful bit of cable news must now flare out in big headlines. it is a systematic stirring up of the anti— German sentiment, and the abnormal increase of suggestibility in the mind of the masses has deprive them of their power to discriminate, to judge, to be fair.”<sup>50</sup>

Anti-German sentiment against Germans within the States, both recent immigrants and long-time residents, were inflamed. The question of loyalty and citizenship, and underlying those concepts, belonging and proper citizenship, were at the heart of anti-

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<sup>49</sup> Kleber, “Anti-German Sentiment,” 190.

<sup>50</sup> Hugo Münsterberg, *The War and America* (New York: D. Appleton, 1914), 19.

German activity. Notes Mike Mackey in his examination of anti-German activity in Wyoming, *The Equality State: Essays on Intolerance and Inequality in Wyoming*, “As the war continued, many people in Columbus and across America began to seek people to blame,” and “Spurred by the exaggerations and distortions of a shrill campaign of anti-German ‘illustrative and descriptive material’ by the governments of the allied nations, many people began to turn against the German-American communities in their own country.”<sup>51</sup> Propaganda was an effective tool to control not only messages about the war, but the conduct of Americans, as well as social markers as to who was a citizen, who belonged.

Propaganda allowed the government to sway public opinion to agree with the aims of the government, and its effectiveness can be measured in the steps taken against enemies of those goals. The targets of these actions were primarily ethnic Germans, but the anti-other sentiment included pacifists and homosexuals, among others. Ethnic Germans were subjected to the most intense processing. Notes Mackey, “In February 1918, the federal government required universal registration up or male alien enemies 14 years of age and older, with similar law being passed for German females that summer. Under both laws, individuals were required to complete a form detailing their personal and employment histories, submit to fingerprinting and provide a picture of themselves for identification. Once the forms were completed and filed with the Justice Department, registrants were then required then issued identification card which they were required to carry with them at all times. Lastly, as part of the government’s efforts, alien enemies could not seek another place of residence without first receiving clearance from federal officials.”<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Mike Mackey, *The Equality State: Essays on intolerance and inequality in Wyoming* (Powell, WY: *Western History Publications*, 1999), 63.

Similar sentiment against resident-enemies arose in Britain, and similar measures were enacted to contain them. As detailed by Matthew Stibbe in “Enemy Aliens and Internment”:

“At the same time the Aliens Restriction Act imposed severe restrictions upon movement for Germans and also closed down German clubs. This measure, together with property confiscation, widespread anti-German riots, which peaked following the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May 1915 when virtually every German owned shop in Britain faced attack, and mass deportation (preceded by deportation of German born males of military age), destroyed the vibrant German community which had emerged in the Victorian and Edwardian years.”<sup>53</sup>

But as Mackey noted, the underlying tension was on others who appeared against, or outside of, the social structure: “Anti-German feelings, which were originally born out of a public resentment with German imperialism in Europe during the early years of the war, blossoms into a patriotic campaign designed to promote unconditional loyalty and toot out any signs of disloyalty.”<sup>54</sup>

### Targeting the “Other” in World War I Hysteria

Heated public sentiment, mob violence and vigilante action followed the propaganda campaigns of WWI. The focus spread to many minority communities, “undesirable” members of society who were now deemed a social threat. In Britain, homosexuals, prostitutes, “low-class” women, as well as Germans living in country, were targeted.

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<sup>52</sup> Mackey, *The Equality State*, 67.

<sup>53</sup> Matthew Stibbe, “Enemy Aliens and Internment,” *1914-1918-Online, International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, (accessed August 29, 2019). [https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/enemy\\_aliens\\_and\\_internment](https://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/enemy_aliens_and_internment).

<sup>54</sup> Mackey, *The Equality State*, 63.

Publications such as “The Imperialist” promoted anti-German conspiracy theories focusing on enemy agents supposedly infiltrating the homeland, and those labeled German sympathizers, who were often pacifists or anti-war activists, weakening the British cause at the behest of the German government. “The Unseen Hand” was one such popular theory, purporting that 47,000 Brits were being blackmailed into subverting the British cause in the war by undercover German homosexuals (homosexuals being known as “urnings”):

“Espionage is punished by death at the Tower of London, but there is a form of invasion which is as deadly as espionage: the systematic seduction of young British soldiers by the German urnings and their agents... Failure to intern all Germans is due to the invisible hand that protects urnings of enemy race... When the blond beast is an urning, he commands the urnings in other lands. They are moles. They burrow. They plot. They are hardest at work when they are most silent.”<sup>55</sup>

“The Unseen Hand” also asserted that Germany was using British women working in the sex trade and purposely infected with sexually transmitted diseases in order to take out British soldiers. *The Imperialist* warned, “The German, through his efficient and clever agent, the Ashkenazim, has complete control of the White Slave Traffic. Germany has found that diseased women cause more casualties than bullets. Controlled by their Jew-agents, Germany maintains in Britain a self-supporting – even profit-making – army of prostitutes which put more men out of action than does their army of soldiers.”

Beatings of anyone seen as a sympathizer to Germany, or of weakening the British cause, were widespread, but targeting of other groups also part of the reign of oppression and was based not on a single race but on any group that was deemed “other”. As occurred in the

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<sup>55</sup> John Simkin. “The Unseen Hand: The Conspiracy That Was Believed.” The Educational Forum, December 20, 2011, Accessed September 4, 2019. <http://educationforum.ipbhost.com/topic/18546-the-unseen-hand-the-conspiracy-that-was-believed/>.

riots during Bloody Monday in 1855, what ire originally targeting ethnic Germans spread to any “lower” race (Irish, other Catholics, then blacks). The common denominator is outsider status, and the equation of “enemies.” As in the United States, the force of xenophobia in Britain during WWI focused on redefining who was or wasn’t a citizen, who did not belong in society and who was an “enemy.” The same ideology can be found in the targeting of “German” dogs.

### Anti-German Canine Campaigns as “Anti-Other” Campaigns

We can see identical concerns around the social membership of outsiders in the anti-dachshund campaign, which included exhortations to socially ostracize dachshunds as “The Dog Nobody Will Know.”<sup>56</sup> I have posited that canine breeds, much like human races, were targeted, especially if not located, physically or socially, in proper spaces and especially during periods of stress. The examination of the targeting of the spitz, with its emphasis on breed, physical type and evolutionary status and its pseudo-scientific justification, echoes the attitudes and tactics of racism and nativism of the period, but an additional source of tension was the increasing intimacy of the canine within human environments. The targeting of the dachshund breed in WWI propaganda involved the use of an animal that had come to not only symbolize the home and qualities of the idealized family, but believed to itself almost embody human qualities, such as loyalty, social fraternity, affection, and be thus held to

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<sup>56</sup> Title of a popular World War I era dachshund poster. See Mary Evan’s anti-dachshund image collection. “Sausage Dogs Persecuted – the Fall of Dachshund during WW1,” *Picturing the Great War: the First World War Blog from Mary Evans Picture Library*, March 4, 2014, accessed October 18, 2019. <https://maryevanspicturelibrary.typepad.com/.a/6a017d4254a056970c01a73d87438c970dpi>.

human expectations of patriotism and trustworthiness. The reaction against the dachshund was not that of revulsion against a degraded animal but the justified treatment of an alien enemy and non-citizen. The dogs were not themselves seen as alien enemies, improperly placed among good society, but were made the embodiment of subgroup of people now deemed as such.

As seen in the targeting of the spitz, the anti-dachshund propaganda campaign shows direct imposition of minority status, or a kind of race identification, based on breed. It also exposed the same tensions over belonging, social markers, and fear of alien elements that marked racialization of humans and rejection of humans not properly located, physically or socially, much like the German-Americans who refused to fully assimilate and who kept many alien traditions/identities, or in Britain of Germans and other minority groups who, as “others,” did not belong and could not claim proper membership in society. These tensions were at their highest during periods of stress, such as the xenophobia, anxiety and fear that developed during WWI, emotions that were easily manipulated by a new science of propaganda. Propaganda, targeted campaigns against specific breeds, accompanied by official sanction/government assistance, can be seen emerging hand-in-hand in breed specific campaigns, and is a response not to dangerous dogs but to dangerous minorities. Such campaigns appear to establish social membership and its opposite, “otherness,” where the targeted breeds were no longer pets but instead served as proxies for suspected outsiders.



## Chapter 5

### Pit Bull Breed and Blackness

The “Pit Bull Panic” of the 1980s and 1990s coincided with negative social focus on black people and black culture as “criminal” and “other,” and an examination shows that such stereotypes were imposed upon the breed itself. The change in status of the canine, increasingly members of the human family and themselves humanized, may have played a part in how these alignments were formed and how pit bulls could be considered to carry “blackness” or even be held responsible for their associations and uses. The emerging dynamics of canine identity also coincided with, and may have factored in, new forms of racializing/otherizing of minorities, such as via animal treatment and social placement below animals. These forms of racializing/ otherizing are justified on a modern methodology of determining minority status as not based solely on supposed animalistic qualities or position on the evolutionary ladder, but increasingly on status of membership in society, as compared to outside of society, i.e. as a contagion of social harm. Pit bulls were depicted as carriers of social harm, and how they fared was based on whether they remained pets and “man’s best friend,” or were identified with blackness.

## History of the Pit Bull and Racial Identity

Pit bulls are known as a breed of canine signified by a compact and stocky body, broad chest and head, muscular haunches and wide mouth.<sup>57</sup> Originally the breed had been bred in Europe as ratters, to control livestock, and for use in dog fighting. After importation to the U.S., they were commonly used by settlers in Western territories as guard dogs, and they continued to be used for dog fighting, which, with the rise of Christian/rationalist ethics and its dictates over stricter use of animals, paired with the evolution of canine status to pet, was gradually outlawed. By early in 20<sup>th</sup> century, pit bulls were used as a symbol of America, even referred to then as “America’s Dog.”<sup>58</sup> Characterized as brave and loyal,<sup>59</sup> they featured in the World War I propaganda that castigated dachshunds. Pit bulls starred on post cards, in pictures, comics and in the movies as war heroes, often in uniform.

They were also the dogs of the “everyman,” a popular, non-fancy breed for working Americans.<sup>60</sup> By the late twentieth century, pit bulls were a popular pet in the black

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<sup>57</sup> Pit bulls are not technically one breed, but a group of “bully” breeds including the Staffordshire bull terrier, the American pit bull terrier and its offshoot the American Staffordshire terrier, and the more recent American bully. Some of these breeds are recognized by the American Kennel Association or its rival, the United Kennel Club, and thus have various levels of legitimacy, but the breed as popularly conceived and treated by government agencies, courts and media encompasses a physical prototype and a set of physical markers of bully dogs (see *State v. Anderson*, referenced below, for how use of physical markers is used to define dogs as “pit bulls”). For the purposes of this paper we will examine them as a single breed.

<sup>58</sup> Per Erin Tarver in her article “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dogs,” “Interestingly, as Colin Dayan points out, this ‘breed’-specific danger is a comparatively recent development, as Staffordshire Terriers were, in the early twentieth century, depicted as prototypical American pets, appearing everywhere from RCA and Buster Brown ads to *The Little Rascals* (Dayan 2010)

<sup>59</sup> Bronwen Dickey, *Pit Bull: The Battle over an American Icon* (New York: Vintage Books, 2017), 68.

community. Associated with black hip hop music, celebrity owners such as the rapper Pit Bull, and the increasingly popular “sport” of urban dogfighting, pit bulls and blacks would become progressively intertwined as protagonists in a “black crisis,” as perceived and disseminated in the media. Tension and legislation over this “black crisis,” fixated on supposed black criminality and cultural pathology. Media focus on the black community as a source of crime, as well as promiscuity, family dysfunction and a host of other social problems, was joined by legislative efforts to fix this social blight brought on by black character.

Although not officially part of this initiative of legislation towards the black community, the suppression/legislation and eradication of the pit bull has been interpreted by some as part of the desire to control the danger of black culture. Through this process, pit bulls acted not only as a proxy for blacks but were themselves characterized with what was perceived as black dysfunction. The result was a virulent campaign against pit bulls that saw vitriol, fake science, hasty legislation and official condemnation virtually across the breadth of the U.S. and in Britain (and beyond). An examination of the targeting of pit bulls as a public safety campaign shows the intersections of old factors such as race, belonging and alien status as well as canine placement within society, and new factors such as pathologized otherness and the humanizing of canines to the extent they serve as targets of minority bias.

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<sup>60</sup> As noted by Dickey in an interview with *Global Animal*, “The dogs were really popular during WWI and the Depression, when there was this nostalgic feeling around the average blue collar working Joe. That’s always been the demographic the dogs were most popular with. They were seen as all-American, no frills, everyday dogs.” “The Truth about Pit Bulls: The Most Feared and the Most Misunderstood,” *Global Animal*, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://www.globalanimal.org/2016/07/08/the-truth-about-pit-bulls-the-most-feared-dogs-may-also-be-the-most-misunderstood/144120/>.

## An Examination of Blackness and Canine Status

Any discourse into the ideas of otherizing and racialization of minorities, must examine closely the history of the human groups involved. As the specifics of minority image and oppression are important in examining breed discrimination campaigns, it is necessary to start with the details of how these people were otherized, how they were or are perceived by the media and by the government: such reflects on the breed campaigns and situates a targeted breed in social context. Dachshunds were direct proxies for the German “enemy,” but it is only in looking at the history of the U.S. and Europe that we find that the Germany enemy was not only the foreign government and citizens of Germany, but the specter of ethnic German-Americans, outsiders, who drove the ire of American citizens in the campaign against dachshunds. In examining the pit bull panic, a closer examination of the campaigns against blacks, who were first criminalized, then otherized, made abnormal and made into contagions, allows us to follow the process that targeted pit bulls.

## Blacks as Criminals and their Neighborhoods as Areas of Dysfunction

As examined in numerous articles, the criminalizing of blacks began in the 1990s as an economic depression caused by globalization and loss of factory jobs that severely increased unemployment, poverty and homelessness.<sup>61</sup> Rising economic and resource disparities disproportionately impacted black communities, where unemployment was two to

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<sup>61</sup> See Yvette Caslin’s article “Heroin Epidemic is Brutal Punishment for White Privilege and Implicit Bias,” on the effects of economic depression and perceptions and treatment of the black community during the drug epidemic. Yvette Caslin, “Heroin Epidemic is Brutal Punishment for White Privilege and Implicit Bias,” Rollingout, May 17, 2017, accessed December 28, 2019. <https://rollingout.com/2017/05/17heroin-epidemic-is-brutal-punishment-white-privilege-bias/>.

four times greater than amongst white peers.<sup>62</sup> Known outcomes of poverty and the despondency related to it, such drug trade and drug and alcohol use, robberies, sex trade work, graffiti, and gang involvement, increased across the nation. Added to the economic depression was the beginning of an intense crack cocaine use epidemic, which was a nationwide phenomenon in cities and suburban locales, but black communities were seen as central nuclei of these problems,

The popular conception, and media portrayal, was of the epidemic as a black problem.<sup>63</sup> This fed into stereotypes of blacks as more greatly disposed to drug use, criminality and family dysfunction. Numerous, often punishing initiatives were launched to address problems ascribed to the black culture, which resulted in skyrocketing incarceration rates among blacks, particularly men.<sup>64</sup>

Areas inhabited by blacks were often referred to as “the projects,” “hoods,” or “ghettos,” racially charged designations that deemphasized these neighborhoods as places with homes populated by families. The stigma was most severe in areas with housing seen as “black.” Monique George, New York Chapter Director of at Community Voices Heard, in

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<sup>62</sup> Drew DeSilver, “Black Unemployment Rate is Consistently Twice That of Whites,” Pew Foundation Research Center, August 21, 2013, accessed August 28, 2019, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/08/21/through-good-times-and-bad-black-unemployment-is-consistently-double-that-of-whites/>.

<sup>63</sup> In reporter Dan Weikel’s article on racial profiling and drug prosecutions, the Los Angeles U.S. attorney confirmed such patterns: “Los Angeles U.S. attorney Nora M. Manella said in an interview that race has nothing to do with the pattern of prosecution. But she acknowledged that federal agents have focused their resources in minority communities, where the crack trade is believed to be the most prevalent and violent. ‘It would be irresponsible to do otherwise,’ she said.” Dan Weikel, “War on Crack Targets Minorities Over Whites,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 21, 1995.

<sup>64</sup> Weikel, “War on Crack Targets Minorities Over Whites,” *Los Angeles Times*.

her 2007 op ed, “Housing Discrimination, Gentrification and Black Lives: We Call These Projects Home,” opined on the stigma, “Is it because when one thinks of public housing, they’re led to think of images of crime and decaying buildings? Is it because the stigma that black people only live in the “projects” and “don’t pay no rent” has created ugly stereotypes that have become all too common?”<sup>65</sup> Black housing was often not seen as housing. The result was that black neighborhoods came to be seen as both centers of, and originators, of blight.

### Creation of “Black Pathology”

As blacks were criminalized, they were also pathologized. Innate dispositions of blacks rather than economic hardship, lack of resources, prejudice and degradation were focused on as problems of the black community. “Welfare Queens” were supposed examples of laziness created by welfare assistance, “wilding” by black youths, as examples of randomized and senseless violence born by poor parenting, public housing dependency as a product of lack of initiative and will power, and crack addiction as examples of stereotypical black propensity to drug use – a stereotype that resulted in a geometrically higher conviction rate for blacks charged with drug use/possession as compared to whites charged for the same crime.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Monique George. “Housing Discrimination, Gentrification and Black Lives: We Call These Projects Home,” *Huffpost*, February 17, 2017, accessed November 14, 2019, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/housing-discrimination-ge\\_b\\_6701758](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/housing-discrimination-ge_b_6701758).

<sup>66</sup> Ekow Yankah, Yeshia University’s School of Law Professor, states, “Thirty years ago, America was facing a similar wave of death, addiction and crime... African-Americans were cast as pathological. Their plight was evidence of collective moral failure, of welfare mothers and rock-slinging thugs and a reason to cut off all help... the only answer lay in

During this period of demarcating blacks out from proper society, traditional animalization abounded in rhetoric about blacks. The period of the pit bull panic/black crisis saw throwbacks to the use of racialization via animal imagery. The most overt example was “wilding,” supposed rampant criminal attacks by packs of juvenile blacks, reports on which created a media frenzy and public hysteria,<sup>67</sup> stoking fears within the white community. As noted by Michelle Alexander in her piece for *The Nation*, “Why Hillary Clinton Doesn’t Deserve the Black Vote,” in reviewing the then First Lady’s political speech made in 1986,

“For example, she (Clinton) used racially coded rhetoric to cast black children as animals. ‘They are not just gangs of kids anymore,’ she said. ‘They are often the kinds of kids that are called ‘super-predators.’ No conscience, no empathy. We can talk about why they ended up that way, but first we have to bring them to heel.’”<sup>68</sup>

Black youth were pathologized as a type of animal, canine in form, but unnatural in character: unfeeling, insensate to their own pain or pain of others, aggressive and naturally violent. These characterizations were mirrored in the portrayal of the pit bull breed popular in their increasingly stigmatized communities.

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cordoning off the wreckage with militarized policing.” Caslin, “Heroin Epidemic is Brutal Punishment for White Privilege and Implicit Bias.”

<sup>67</sup> Speaking of the most notorious “wilding” case, the “Central Park Jogger,” Elizabeth Hinton noted, “Ultimately, the hysteria surrounding the Central Park Jogger case gave rise to new language about black-youth crime and to new laws that cause more children to stand trial as adults than at any other time in American history.” Elizabeth Hinton, “How the ‘Central Park Five’ Changed the History of American Law,” *The Atlantic*, June 2, 2019, accessed November 3, 2019, <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/06/when-they-see-us-shows-cases-impact-us-policy/590779/>.

<sup>68</sup> Michelle “Why Hillary Clinton Doesn’t Deserve the Black Vote,” *The Nation*, February 10, 2016, accessed January 26, 2020, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/hillary-clinton-does-not-deserve-black-peoples-votes/>.

## Pit Bulls in Black Communities

Pit bulls were popular in black and latinx neighborhoods by the 1980s. They had been a common breed through the 1950s but other, often fancier, breeds such as Labradors, Collies and Setters had eclipsed them. Their rise in popularity amongst blacks and Latinx during the 1970s and 1980s may be lie in their historic association with military service and American military might,<sup>69</sup> equating them with a macho, “tough” persona. Their stocky build and history of use in dog fighting also added to this image. According to Dickey, in *Pit Bull: The Battle Over an American Icon*, a campaign against the vestiges of dog fighting which focused on the pit bull may have inadvertently promoted them as superior guard dogs.<sup>70</sup> The 1980s saw the pit bull’s popularity spike in black and communities, mainly as pets.

## Pit Bulls as Black

As had happened previously in times of stress, the malignant feelings towards a minority community were materialized in the scapegoat figure of a specified canine breed which was an aberration among canines, just as in racist theories there were aberrant races among men.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See Heidi Nast’s study of the Pit Bull and racism in dog fighting in “Pit bulls, Slavery, and Whiteness in the Mid- to Late-Nineteenth Century US: Geographical Trajectories. Primary Sources.”

<sup>70</sup> According to Dickey, an anti-dog fighting campaign by the Humane Society emphasized the pit bull as a combatant in the deadly sport in which smaller canines were often victimized. “The Truth About Pit Bulls: The Most Feared and the Most Misunderstood,” *Global Animal*, accessed January 27, 2020, <https://www.globalanimal.org/2016/07/08/the-truth-about-pit-bulls-the-most-feared-dogs-may-also-be-the-most-misunderstood/144120/>.

<sup>71</sup> The use of breeds as symbols of different races is longstanding, and historically breeds and race were often conflated. States Nast, “The idea of race and breed co-evolved



As a popular breed in the improper spaces of poor and working-class minority black and latinx communities, pit bulls were made proxies for black men in anxiety over black culture, and emphasis was put on the pit bull's physical and characteristic qualities as associated with black people. Similar to the historic use of comparative physiology and phrenology to confirm racial and nativist ideology, pseudoscience was used to identify supposed qualities of the pit bull that marked it out as an abnormal canine breed.<sup>72</sup>

Reaching back to old stereotypes of blacks, the media emphasized the innate aggressive and primal nature of the pit bull breed using imagery and language in comparisons that overtly or covertly referenced black people.<sup>73</sup> Supposedly abnormal physiology of pit bulls, such as broad, "thick" skulls, broad snouts/noses, muscular torsos and muscular haunches,<sup>74</sup> were the same references used in pseudo-science to mark black people as

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through various nineteenth-century discourses, including those related to supremacist endeavors. The suturing of the ideas was initially accomplished through the work of the amateur (and highly prolific) British scientists, Francis Galton... half cousin of Charles Darwin... who coined the term 'eugenics' in 1883." She continues, "He and many proponents of eugenics in the U.S., Britain, France, and Germany hence spoke interchangeably of race and breed." Nast, "Pit bulls, slavery, and whiteness," 142.

<sup>72</sup> Abnormal physicality as noted in *Hearn v. Overland Park*, in which an appeals court confirmed "The appearance of these dogs typifies strength and athleticism. They can climb trees, they have extremely strong jaws and biting power, and they tend to clamp onto something and not let go." *Hearn v. Overland Park* (1989), 244 Kan. 638, 722 P. 2d 758 (1989).

<sup>73</sup> Notably, black people were not unaware of the crossover of stereotypes. As observed by reporter Yasmin Nair, "The link made between savage beasts or dangerous animals and black humans is as old as the history of enslavement. As the actor Michael B. Jordan memorably phrased it: "Black males, we are America's pit bull. We're labeled vicious, inhumane, and left to die on the street." Yasmin Nair, "Racism and the American Pit Bull," *Current Affairs*, <https://www.currentaffairs.org/2016/09/racism-and-the-american-pit-bull>.

<sup>74</sup> Researchers note anthropoid features marking blacks as inferior to whites (examples as detailed in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*) such as "short flat snub nose"; (d)

different from supposedly evolved races, that is whites, and closer to the animal state. The notion of extreme athleticism, unusual muscularity is a stereotype of blacks as typified in the concept of “natural athletes,” and harks back to slavery-era notions of notions of blacks as natural workers and built for hard labor. Such notions of extreme muscularity and power were now was applied to pit bulls, marking them as different from other breeds and as specifically dangerous in their physicality.<sup>75</sup> The stereotype of pit bulls as insensate to pain mirrors the myth of black people’s supposed limited ability to feel pain, which has been documented by researchers Plous and Williams, in their article, “Racial Stereotypes From the Days of American Slavery: A Continuing Legacy.”<sup>76</sup> This stereotype was common during the slavery era and, as Plous and Williams show, continue to modern times, even if often subconsciously.

With the advent of the “black crisis,” pit bulls were mythologically endowed with outsized physical characteristics similar to, and sometimes intersecting those attributed to black slaves, such as supernatural strength and extreme endurance. Pit bulls were now also pathologized with characteristics mirroring those levied at supposedly out-of-control blacks: unfeeling, insensate to their own pain or pain of others, aggressive and naturally violent. Erin Tarver associated the fear and media coverage of wilding with the attempts to legislate the black community, and proposes a substitution was made in the legislation of pit bulls.

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"thick protruding lips"; (e) "exceedingly thick cranium." S. Plous and Tyrone Williams, “Racial Stereotypes from the Days of American Slavery: A Continuing Legacy,” *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 25, (1995): 796, doi: 10.1111/j.1559-1816.1995.tb01776.x.

<sup>75</sup> The State of Florida v. Donna Lynn Peters and Joy Ivy Shupnick, 534So.2d 760 (FlaApp 3Dist. 1988).

<sup>76</sup> Plous and Williams, “Racial Stereotypes,” 796.

“Interestingly, during the same period as the uptick in media reporting on pit bulls and their owners, journalists popularised the use of a new term, ‘wilding’ to describe the criminal violence of ‘packs’ (or sometimes, ‘wolfpacks’) of black and Latino youth (Welch, Price and Yankey 2002). A metonymic feedback loop thus comes to characterise the relationship between pit bulls, blackness and the perception of criminality – a relationship which, if Robin James is correct, functions at least in part to set these dogs up as a proxy for the black men that municipalities would like to legislate against, but cannot (James forthcoming).”<sup>77</sup>

The danger of such extreme and unnatural physicality created a theoretical need for extreme reaction, in the name of protecting society. One example of supernatural abilities associated with pit bulls was their biting ability. Widely reported to be of phenomenal power and featuring a supposed “locked jaw” mechanism, the pit bull’s bite supposedly required killing a dog in order to break its hold. This media campaign, with reports of pit bull supernatural physicality, and limited sensate feeling, led to the myth that the breed, once in attack mode, could not be stopped through the usual means of controlling a dog: commands, treats, affection, collaring, manual intervention or anything less than shooting. This approach of supposed “forced” extreme and often mortal suppression of pit bull physicality may be found to have similarities to the same approach towards black people deemed to be “acting out,” requiring similar extreme suppression, often mortal.<sup>78</sup> We see a shared criminalization, with negative consequences for those targeted, both blacks and pit bulls, especially those in black neighborhoods.

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<sup>77</sup> Tarver, “Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 10.

<sup>78</sup> “Why Do U.S. Police Keep Killing Unarmed Black Men?” BBC News, May 26, 2015, accessed September 12, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32740523>.

## Chapter 6

### Breed Discrimination Campaign against the Pit Bull: A Criminal Campaign

An examination of the anti-Pit Bull campaign of the 1980s and 1990s will show a parallel trajectory of stereotyping, pathologizing, sensationalizing by the media, and criminalizing via resulting government policymaking, of pit bulls as experienced by the black community during the economic recession and drug epidemic of that period.

#### Pathologizing and Criminalizing the Pit Bull

As noted, beginning in the mid-1980s, pit bulls were increasingly targeted in media coverage and for legislation in a blanket campaign that had many of the qualities of the war propaganda of World War I in its depth and sensationalism. As with the anti-dachshund campaign, the effect was the targeting and scapegoating of a minority during a period of social stress. But while the anti-dachshund campaign was a coordinated effort between government and media in the name of patriotism, the anti-pit bull campaign was less a coordinated effort and more a reaction based on latent racism that allowed for media sensationalism and heavy-handed government initiatives aimed at certain people and their dogs. Thus, coverage on pit bulls during the black crisis was notable not only for its breadth across the nation, but its use of questionable science and hyperbolic statements of pseudo-scientific “facts” in the vein of scientific racism and stereotypes existent since slavery. It also focused on qualities depicted as unique to pit bulls as a breed, as compared to all other breeds, a kind of racializing/otherizing of pit bulls.

## Pit Bulls as Portrayed in Media Coverage

Media coverage created and disseminated a new demonized image of the pit bull in sensationalized stories that depicted the pit bull as the bearer of antisocial elements and that mirrored the sensationalized press on the perceived black crisis. The intensity of the coverage and the resulting “unprecedented legislation” against pit bulls, is noted by Ann Schiavone in her article in the *Animal Law Review*, “Barking Up the Wrong Tree.” Reviewing media in 1987, amidst national concerns such as a tense stand-off between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, as well as the televised Iran – Contra hearings, media headlines were focusing on pit bulls: “Communities across the US are being told they are under attack, not from foreign governments or terrorists, but from dogs in their community, specifically dogs known as ‘pit bulls.’ During that month, no less than four major national magazines featured stories sensationalizing the danger of these dogs that supposedly prowled the street of their neighborhoods, ready to attack at a moment’s notice, unexpected and unprovoked.”<sup>79</sup> The media’s involvement in the anti-pit bull campaign spread the campaign nationwide (and occurred internationally: Britain passed the Dangerous Dog Act in 1991, and similar legislation was seen in France) and fueled the public’s growing fear. Notes Judy Cohen and John Richardson in their 2002 article “Pit Bull Panic”<sup>80</sup> commentating on the role of the media to establish truth for the public: “They are, no doubt, in part influenced by media accounts. The general public also looks to the media for information to warn them of dangers that they need to avoid (De Becker 294-5).”

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<sup>79</sup> Ann Schiavone, “Barking Up the Wrong Tree: Regulating Fear, Not Risk,” *Animal Law Review* 22, no. 1 (2015): 10.

<sup>80</sup> Judy Cohen and John Richardson, “Pit Bull Panic,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 2 (2002): 290.

The authors note the biased media coverage had a concrete effect on public perception of pit bulls and legislation regarding them. They note, “The Pit Bull has been portrayed in the past one and a half decades as ‘the archetype of canine evil, predators of the defenseless. Unpredictable companions that kill and maim without discretion. Walking horror shows bred with an appetite for violence (sic)’ (Verzemnieks B6). This news coverage has had profound effects. Pit Bull ownership brings with it consequences not associated with most acquisitions.<sup>81</sup> Cohen and Richardson examine “How the press misleads,” using various techniques, language and imagery<sup>82</sup> however they make no connection to minority bias. However, they do note that in addition to intensive media coverage, the subject of ownership was a factor in how the dogs were portrayed in the many news stories which covered the “pit bull crisis.” They note, “Of the 72 stories that the *New York Times* published on Pit Bulls between 1987 and 2000, 26 (over one third) covered Pit Bull attacks on people. Twenty-two stories covered legislation restricting Pit Bull ownership; nine described Pit Bull owners, who are portrayed as the dregs of society.”

#### Pit Bulls and Government Action and Legislation

This media coverage was authenticated by pronouncements by experts and government officials, and then legitimized in ordinances and court findings. Schiavone noted, “The types of ordinances passed is numerous and varied as the communities that passed them. Some laws require registration and restrict breeding of certain breeds in the

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<sup>81</sup> Cohen and Richardson, “Pit Bull Panic,” 285.

<sup>82</sup> Cohen and Richardson, “Pit Bull Panic,” 291.

jurisdiction. Others outright ban ownership of keeping of certain breeds, while others place restrictions on ownership in creative ways, such as requiring all dogs of certain breeds to be muzzled and leashed when outside, requiring certain fence heights or materials, or even requiring the tattooing of restricted breeds kept in the jurisdiction. Many localities require special insurance or permits. Often municipal laws will combine two or more of these requirements.<sup>83</sup>

The media was joined by those claiming expertise in pit bulls, including medical professional whose background was in human medicine, and who used shaky scientific methodology or misunderstood basic facts about the pit bull breed.<sup>84</sup> Notes Bronwen Dickey in *Pit Bull*, “The majority of medical journal articles written about pit bulls were authored by physicians” not qualified to speak on “matters of animal anatomy, health or behavior. Over time, their research reflected the strong bias of the media, in some cases directly citing the popular press (rather than veterinary professionals) for “facts” on canine science. The claims made in these journals then fueled the same media myth machine they had drawn their information from in a sort of closed feedback loop, not unlike the dubious link between spitz dogs and rabies that prevailed among physicians in the 1870s.” Dickey notes a number of

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<sup>83</sup> Schiavone, “Barking Up,” 24.

<sup>84</sup> Dickey notes one of the first and most influential of these studies published in the journal *Pediatrics*, which concluded that pit bulls made up disproportionate number of dog bite-related fatalities according to their overall numbers compared to the number of such fatalities. Here, the study’s authors failed to account for the several canine breeds that count as pit bulls, thus undercounting the population of pit bulls by over 95%. States Dickey, “Pinckney and Kennedy’s erroneous paper was the first to indicate pit bulls as being ‘disproportionately’ responsible for human deaths. It would be cited in eighty-two other scientific journal articles and legal opinions.” Dickey, *Pit Bull*, 174.

medical journals<sup>85</sup> cited the inflammatory Sport Illustrated article which detailed the supposed special damage done by pit bull bites, which have not been backed by scientific evidence.

Thus “scientific” proof of the pit bull’s uniqueness and malignancy as a breed was based on pseudo-science methodology, as described by Dr. Rory Coker, “The emphasis (of pseudoscience) is not on meaningful, controlled, repeatable scientific experiments. Instead it is on unverifiable eyewitness testimony, stories and tall tales, hearsay, rumor, and dubious anecdotes. Genuine scientific literature is either ignored or misinterpreted.” In the case of supposed scientific claims made about the pit bull breed, even scientific journals made declarations based on anecdotes, rumors and stereotypes. Such declarations lent legitimacy to increasingly extreme and unsubstantiated claims about the danger of pit bulls. These included their supposed unnatural physicality such as the assertion that pit bulls have a powerful “locked jaw,”<sup>86</sup> assertions that a pit bull bite is a “force of 2,000 pounds per square inch,” and that pit bulls’ nervous systems are impervious to pain.<sup>87</sup> These declarations were used as the basis for ordinances aimed at pit bulls. In *State of Florida v. Peters*, pit bulls were described as possessing

“massive canine jaws (which) can crush a victim with up to two thousand pounds (2000) of pressure per square inch – three times that of a German

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<sup>85</sup> *Texas Medicine* (1988), *The Journal of Trauma* (1989), and others. Dickey, *Pit Bull*, 185.

<sup>86</sup> In *Toledo v. Tellings*, Dr. I Lehr Brisbin, University of Georgia, asserted, “The few studies which have been conducted of the structure of the skulls, mandibles and teeth of pit bulls show that, in proportion to their size, their jaw structure and thus its inferred functional morphology, is no different than that of any breed of dog.” *Toledo v. Tellings*, 2006-Ohio-975. <http://www.sconet.state.oh.us/rod/docs/pdf/6/2006/2006-ohio-975.pdf>.

<sup>87</sup> *The State of Florida v. Donna Lynn Peters and Joy Ivy Shupnick*, 534So.2d 760 (FlaApp 3Dist. 1988).



shepherd or Doberman pincher, making the pit bulls jaws the strongest of any animal, per pound.”

In *Vanater v. South Point*,<sup>88</sup> the court cited extreme traits unique to pit bulls, descriptions echoed from the headlines, or based on journal publications which did not use measurable scientific methodology, including unusual “weight pulling ability...a history of frenzy, which is the trait of unusual relentless ferocity or the extreme concentration and fighting and attacking...,the ability to be extremely destructive and aggressive... highly tolerant of pain... great biting strength... undying tenacity and courage...” and that they are “highly unpredictable.” The claims of imperviousness to pain were repeated in *State v. Peters*<sup>89</sup>: (Pit bulls have) “a high (in)sensitivity to pain,” and a “natural tendency to refuse to terminate an attack once it has begun.”

In *Singer v. Cincinnati*,<sup>90</sup> the evidence presented at trial establish that pit bull’s “possess inherit characteristics of aggression, strength, viciousness and unpredictability not found in other dog breeds.” That pit bulls were inherently different from canines in general was emphasized. In *State. v. Anderson*,<sup>91</sup> assertions were made that “the pit bull possesses certain distinctive behavioral features which differentiate it from other dog breeds,” and the difference was often in character: “Unlike dogs who bite or attacked nearly to protect a person or his property and then retreat once the danger has passed, pit bulls besiege their victims relentlessly, until severe injury or death results.”

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<sup>88</sup> Robert R. Vanater v. Village of South Point, 717 F.Supp.1236 (D. Ohio 1989).

<sup>89</sup> State v. Peters 534 So. 2d 760 (Fla. App. 1988).

<sup>90</sup> Singer v. Cincinnati, 566 N.E.2d 190, 57 Ohio App 3d 1 (1990).

<sup>91</sup> State. v. Anderson, 57 Ohio St.3d 168, 172 (1991).

Claims about pit bulls' physical abilities and inability to feel pain were also eventually debunked, but not before being so widely disseminated that they are still commonly believed. As noted after expert testimony in *Toledo v. Tellings*,<sup>92</sup> pit bulls were found to have normal musculature and strength levels akin to other breeds or mixtures of their size and build: "Despite the pit bull's reputation for body strength, in weight pulling competitions, many other breeds do well or better. A pit bull's musculature is no different than other strong, well-muscled dogs, such as Saint Bernards, bull mastiffs, Rottweilers, and malamutes." When reliable organizations refuted claims against pit bulls, the information was rarely covered by the media. As Cohen and Richardson noted, "the American Temperament Test Society ranked Pit Bulls fourth highest out of all breeds for reliable good temperament...." <sup>93</sup>

Finally various authorities reported on the supposed abnormal bite strength of the pit bull, despite studies like those conducted by the American Temperament Society which found that pit bull bite strength was akin to other dogs, an assertion also backed by Dr. I. Lehr Brisbin in *Toledo v. Tellings*, who cited skeletal studies of pit bulls that found their bite strength in the normal range and likely less than some other popular breeds. But this information was not widely disseminated by the media. Instead the media continued to focus on pit bulls' other unnatural attributes: their immunity from pain, their supernatural strength, and their mindless endurance.

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<sup>92</sup> *Toledo v. Tellings*, 2006-Ohio-975 (2006).

<sup>93</sup> Cohen and Richardson, "Pit Bull Panic," 288.

## Results of “Pit Bull Panic” Campaign

The insurance, housing, fencing, and muzzling requirements meant pit bulls lost social status and many of the social markers canines now generally held as near-humans. The anti-pit bull media campaign created the aura of a legitimate public health safety issue of a breed that had been existent in the U.S. for nearly 200 years. Some animal welfare organizations such as PETA began to automatically euthanize pit bulls who came into their custody. Local shelters turned pit bulls away, or refused to adopt them out, which inevitably led to more euthanizing.<sup>94</sup> This was also reflected in the number of police shootings of pit bulls.<sup>95</sup> In effect, the breed became increasingly illegal.<sup>96</sup> As it stood outside social norms for dogs, the pit bull’s identity became more controversial and multi-faceted, reflecting the changing identity of the canine within human society.

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid, “Pit Bull Panic,” 290.

<sup>95</sup> Police shootings of pit bulls widespread across the nation, engendering specific legislation on dog training. Quoting Deputy Chief Richard Chiarello of the Round Lake, Illinois Police Department in 2007, “Our officers are not immune to what they see on the news about dogs. They realize (pit bulls) as a threat that can cause a great bit of harm,” “Cops Kill Family Pet during Drug Search,” *Chicago Tribune*, March 16, 2007. <https://www.shroomery.org/forums/showflat.php/Number/6676237>

<sup>96</sup> Cohen and Richardson “Pit Bull Panic,” 283. “In some places, Pit Bull ownership is not even allowed; in fact, ownership is banned in 75 communities in the United States.”

## Chapter 7

### Examination Pit Bull Identities Reflecting Canine Humanization

During the pit bull panic, the breed began to take on alternate identities to pets, some of which were formerly distinctly human identities such as improper neighbor and co-conspirator. Examining these, we can see a common thread reflecting the continued evolution towards a more humanized canine figure, even as pit bulls suffered under discrimination.

#### Pit Bulls as Proxies

In the vein of classic animalization, pit bulls acted as proxies for black men during the black crisis. As noted by Tarver and other researchers, much of the sensationalism of media coverage and the subsequent legislation, restricting their movement, requiring insurance or bonds, banning them from housing, and muzzling them, was an expression of white desire to contain supposed black criminality and abnormality.<sup>97</sup> As pit bulls were a favored pet in the black community, these restrictions had real life effects on black owners and their dogs. As discussed by Schiavone, then and today many low-income owners are forced to give up their pit bull pets, or risk losing their housing, being subject to fines, paying extra for licensing and insurance, etc., effects that people of means can easily escape.<sup>98</sup> Those in highly scrutinized and canvassed areas such as ghettos, those in areas where housing is public housing, much of which ban pit bulls, and those in areas where police are likely to stop and question civilians,

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<sup>97</sup> Schiavone, "Barking Up," 75.

<sup>98</sup> Cohen and Richardson, "Pit Bull Panic," 297.

find keeping a pit bull onerous or impossible. Cohen and Richardson suggest that pit bulls may act as proxies in deflating social tensions with parties that cannot be confronted directly, noting, “Drug lords and street gangs are hard to control, but their alleged mascots, Pit Bulls, maybe easier to control, through legislation or, on a more extreme level, vigilantism.”

### Pit Bull as Moral Threat

The breed’s promoted reputation only exacerbated a cycle that created pit bulls as attack dogs. Schiavone describes a process wherein a popular dog is involved in a few incidents and the result is a cycle of negative media coverage and social hysteria, feeding one on one another, but she stresses that the cycle is not primarily based on public safety from dog attacks on humans. Rather, Schiavone theorizes, the cycle is a “Moral Panic,” a reaction to a perceived menace that endangers the community morality. The focus for moral panic theory, as detailed by Dickey in *Pit Bull*, was an “other,” whose practices or existence became the subject of intense, unsubstantiated claims, hysteria and violent social rejection. States Dickey, “(London School of Economics Professor) Stanley Cohen first laid out his theory of what he called “moral panic...a sudden swell in “fundamentally inappropriate” hysteria about a novel, obscure or previously ignored phenomenon that causes members of a society to fear not just for their personal safety but also for their entire way of life. Cohen believe that moral panics arise during times of increased social tension, when serve as psychological distractions from much more frustrating and intractable issues, like poverty, unemployment, or racial unrest.

Not surprisingly, often the targets of moral panics were racial or ethnic minorities:

“Moral panics cohere around the wrongdoing of what Cohen called ‘folk devils,’ or members of a social group who can be easily portrayed first as

different, then as deviant. Any group can come under scrutiny, as long as its members can be framed as cultural ‘outsiders’ whose actions pollute and threaten the lies of good, decent people. Religious, ethnic, and political minorities are almost always the easiest target.”<sup>99</sup>

Moral panics, Schiavone concurs, occur when a group or segment of society becomes fearful of a “perceived moral threat,” one “that somehow attacks or undermines the group or societal values.” The social values that Schiavone refers to often involved rejection based on race or origin, coded as good and bad people and good and bad locations/neighborhoods, although the author does not acknowledge such bias. From “Barking up the Wrong Tree,” Schiavone notes the media coverage which sensationalized the new position of pit bulls:

“That same week, *Time* gave us a vivid description of what we should fear: ferocious pitbulls can be seen any day with their drug – dealer owners on the corner of ninth and Butler Street in North Philadelphia. The dogs, with names like murder, Hitler and Scarface, wear metal – studded collars concealing crack and cocaine and the day’s proceeds. They are equally visible on Chicago’s west and south side, where teenage boys have taken to brandishing their fearsome pit bulls just as they would a switchblade or a gun.”<sup>100</sup>

Schiavone does not note the distinct racial undertones of this news item, despite the story’s focus on the location of pit bulls in primarily black or black/latinx neighborhoods (North Philadelphia, the South side of Chicago and the West side of Chicago<sup>101</sup>). While Schiavone’s “moral panic” theory does not touch on race as a factor, she does note the

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<sup>99</sup> Tarver, *Pit Bull*, 185.

<sup>100</sup> Schiavone, “Barking Up,” 11.

<sup>101</sup> In 2009, the census found the South Side of Chicago to be 93% black. In 2010, the West side of Chicago was 44% black and 34% Latino/Hispanic, and that year in North Philadelphia, blacks comprised 72% of the population. “Fact Sheet: Zip Code Tabulation Area 60619,” U.S. Census Bureau; “West Side of Chicago,” Wikipedia, accessed January 3, 2020, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/West\\_Side\\_Chicago](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Side_Chicago); “West Philly History,” University of Pennsylvania, accessed January 30, 2020, [westphillyhistory.archives.upenn.edu](http://westphillyhistory.archives.upenn.edu).

singling out of the “other” in society: “Because the perception of these dogs is one of “counterculture” and the “other “in society, people have been more willing to allow “that breed” of dog to be banned, because that breed, as symbolized by its most common owners, is morally corrupt.<sup>102</sup>

#### Pit Bull as “Other”

Schiavone notes past instances of various breeds being vilified: “In the early 20th century, the Carly and the St. Bernard were vilified. By the 1920s the German Shepherd dog had begun to get a bad reputation until its use as a police dog overcame the initial prejudice, but by World War II, the Doberman pincher, often pictured with Nazi henchmen, solidified its place as public enemy number one.”<sup>103</sup> However, the Doberman Pinscher was not subjected to a campaign of either abuse or legislation. As noted by Schiavone, the German Shepherd breed’s reputation improved with its use as a police dog, but she fails to note that the time period also coincides with the shedding of the ethnic heritage by most German-Americans following the anti-German sentiment of World War I, a process which helped the dachshund breed recover its social standing during that same era. In looking at these instances of breed discrimination, there is lack of evidence of these breeds as targets of active blanket campaigns involving media or government intervention. Schiavone notes that despite a history of that breed vilification, none led to breed specific laws (BSL), and, in her words, “unprecedented” ordinances: “It is only recently, since the mid-1980s, that this cycle has led communities to pass breed-specific laws, banning or severely curtailing the ownership of

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<sup>102</sup> Schiavone, “Barking Up,” 70.

<sup>103</sup> Schiavone, “Barking Up,” 20.

certain breeds.” The period of the mid-1980s coincides with the beginning of criminalization and pathologizing of the black community via media sensationalism and government legislation.

In examining the gap, we can find that where anti-breed campaigns have occurred, there has usually been association with minority groups, particularly once dogs were allowed intimate status in human society. Even an association with a foreign enemy, as Schiavone notes of the Doberman pincher’s association with Nazis during World War II, did not subject the breed to the abuse or legislation that the dachshund experienced for their association with a minority “other” within the society, as German Americans were seen. The specter of an alien, one outside of proper society appears to have driven these breed discrimination campaigns. However, with the pit bull panic, a breed appears to have not only served as a proxy for a minority, but as a target for anti-minority bias as a minority figure itself.

### Pit Bulls as Contagion

Further in the vein of the changing process of racialization/otherizing, and the ability of canines to take human positions in society, are the canines’ vulnerability to taking on the racial/other bias directed at human minorities. Erin Tarver’s examination of pit bulls and criminality as a contagion, “The Dangerous Individual(’s) Dog: Race, Criminality and the ‘Pit Bull’” is based on Michel Foucault’s theory of contagious criminality for minorities located within certain downtrodden areas. Tarver examines the treatment of pit bulls, racism, and dog fighting in light of this theory of contagion, which involves the use of criminalization as a means to otherize minorities, thus establishing specific mechanisms of “normalizing” to establish what constitutes society. States Tarver,



“...Foucault suggests, the drive to uncover some undetected latent criminality or danger that can be subsequently understood as causally connected to some particular criminal violation is part and parcel of a discourse of normalisation that is not content to merely punish crimes or discipline criminals – *but instead, which is concerned to identify such unsavory elements in order to protect the health of ‘good society’* (my italics).”<sup>104</sup>

As Tarver notes, the use of public health and safety campaigns as a means to identify, stigmatize and contain minority elements of society has been examined by Foucault and other social researchers as an effective way to racialize groups by the “production of race.”<sup>105</sup> Where these ‘dangerous’ elements resided harks back to original concerns over proper location and placement in society. The designated space for racialization and contamination during the ‘pit bull crisis’ was the ghetto, where humans “caught” the contagion of blackness. Notably, following this logic we see a canine breed also “catching” the character and outsider status of “blackness.” Race is here defined as an abnormality that pit bulls are able share with humans.

### Pit Bulls as Improper Neighbor/Improper Element

Tarver finds that, per Foucault’s theory of contaminated space, the taint of the “ghetto” was given as both the reason and the cause for the breed’s bad character. These sprung from the supposed criminality of a space and a minority group within it. Notes

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<sup>104</sup> Tarver, “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 277.

<sup>105</sup> Says Tarver, “Ellen K. Feder has persuasively argued that this normalising investigation, which is ‘aimed at . . . the individualising of a group against whom the population needs protection’ (Feder 2007: 66), continues in earnest in the contemporary United States through federal programs whose aim is to identify individuals ‘at risk’ for violence – and moreover, that these biopolitical initiatives are crucially instrumental in the ‘production of race’ (Feder 2007: 62).”

Tarver, “the extent to which ‘the ghetto’ as racialised space is pathologised as a zone of danger. This danger is not only the ‘danger’ of the so-called ‘bad neighborhood’ through which white folks avoid walking or driving (Mills 1997), but a danger of criminalised contagion that, it is suggested, infects its inhabitants, making of them potential criminals or deviants.”<sup>106</sup> Foucault theorized that minority neighborhoods served to both identify members of the targeted group, and as a defined space for the destruction of such group by isolating and leaving them to results of the social ills, where such ills were deemed the result of their own innate criminal pathology. Thus, the space of a ghetto itself serves as a tool for racialization (and otherizing based on nationality); pit bulls were tainted by their association with the ghetto, in addition to their black owners, and I assert that the mechanism which allowed pit bulls to take on minority identity, or contamination, was their change in status in society.

As we follow the thread of increasing near-human status for canines, we can note that an important factor in the contamination of pit bulls was this unique status. Their presence in ghettos alone was not enough to contaminate them with the criminality/abnormal pathology of the ghetto, despite Tarver’s assertion that, “The zone of dangerousness thus may be carried not only in the bodies of individuals or populations, but in the environments, artifacts, practices – and animals – associated with them.”<sup>107</sup> We see that Pit bulls had to have presumed human facets/status in order to take on black pathology/criminality. Cats, birds and

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<sup>106</sup> Tarver, “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 6.

<sup>107</sup> Tarver, “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 8.

other species within the designated area of ghetto, however, were not tainted with black pathology.

Pit bull status as near humans in contaminated spaces shaped the public campaign against them. The redirection of mechanisms of prejudice from a human target based on race to a canine target based on breed, exposes the complicated and shaded status of canines – now beings who could be associated with a pathologized space, geographically and culturally. As the ghetto became a sphere from which the rest of the public had to be protected, the pit bull was another contaminated member of the sphere. The pit bull was not simply symbolic of the ghetto or of black people but was viewed both a protagonist and victim of black pathology, as black people were often simultaneously viewed as protagonists of black criminality and victims of their own nature.

### Pit Bulls as Co-Conspirators

The use of pit bulls in dog fighting tied them to criminality, including gambling and animal abuse. In the self-proclaimed rational and morally-uplifted identity of the white bourgeois class, dog fighting represented irrational cruelty towards animals, as opposed to “legitimate” use of animals in practices such as mass farming, hunting and foie gras production. (all of which take a toll on the animal as it is turned into “product”). It was deemed an unacceptable practice which placed participants, canine and human, outside the bounds of proper society.

Pit bulls were simultaneously portrayed as victims of dog fighting, and as active participants whose innate nature and physicality made their use in dog fighting rings near

inevitable. Meanwhile fighters and “bait dogs” of other breeds were seen exclusively as victims. As dog fighting was seen as a black “sport,” pit bulls were classed with blacks as co-participants in a taboo activity. As noted by Dickey of media imagery of pit bulls protecting crack houses and criminals from police, “implied that the pit bull was ... a demented marionette used by the crack dealer, who in turn was described as an urban “predator,” who sought out the weak and the vulnerable. By fending off police, pit bulls were portrayed as crack-dealing “accomplices” who abetted the rapid growth of the drug trade. To see just how closely the terms “crack cocaine “and “pit bull” were linked in the media, one need look no further than the Google Ngram Viewer, which charts word frequencies in published materials. From 1986 to 1990, the two terms followed a curve that is almost identical.”<sup>108</sup>

As discussed, an emerging difference between the pit bull panic and historic incidents of breed discrimination is the pathologizing of a canine in the same vein as humans, and the placement of canines into human categories. Canines now could be treated as criminals and were often portrayed as complicit in crimes against them, and more importantly, against society, in breaking social barriers and violating social norms. As noted by Tarver, the policy of criminalizing dog fighting was not to protect the dogs, but to protect good society. She states:

“The image of the dogfight is fraught with meaning that goes beyond an interest in treating animals ethically. Indeed, examination of animal cruelty law and policy would suggest that the welfare of individual dogs is not, on the whole, the primary object of concern: as Colin Dayan points out, such policy routinely calls for the extermination of even those dogs that resemble fighting ones (2010).”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Dickey, *Pit Bull*, 185.

<sup>109</sup> Tarver, “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 9.

Tarver, speaking on the infamous Bad Newz Kennels case which saw the kennel's owner, NFL quarterback Michael Vick face not only criminal charges but social censure for dog fighting, says "The concomitant revulsion toward both dogfighting and 'pit bulls' suggests an expression of fear of a perceived threat to normative whiteness, insofar as these 'dangerous' dogs are figured as carriers of the contagion of racial abnormality."

Like humans, pit bulls can take on criminal identity and racial abnormality. Although the role filled by pit bulls is a negative one, it is nonetheless one of a human identity, an identity that other animals cannot share with human groups. Alligators cannot be criminals, even if they are dangerous to humans, and cats, birds and hamsters do not carry racial abnormality. All remain firmly in the world of the animal, where they may be used for racialization/othering of humans by makings of comparison, and they may be used as proxies for acts that cannot be imposed/perpetrated on humans. But they cannot act as humans. While its own animal state is a factor in its use in racism and nativism, and the use of animals to racialize or otherize remains in force, this unique attribution of canines intersects with racialization/othering as it has been historically practiced and challenges the usual boundaries of the animal/human divide. The result is new placements on the perceived evolutionary ladder and new forms of racializing/othering.

## Chapter 8

### The Humanized Canine Identity in Dog Fighting

A further examination of the controversy over dog fighting, the crime most associated between pit bulls and blackness, reveals how identity for both a breed and the humans associated with it, bears in how the controversy plays out. Social researchers have noted that canines can be labeled with human traits, but I theorize that dog identity is a further development of the canine's placement within society, the home, and the family. Tarver and other social researchers acknowledge that pit bulls can act as carriers of blackness, a connection that speaks not just to the bias that stereotypes black people, but to the status of canines in human society; an animal that not only stands in proxy for a targeted minority, but one that can also carry human traits, act as receptacles for human-to-human bias, and be held to human standards of behavior, is not just perceived as an animal. The changing status of pit bulls impacted how otherizing occurred and its use in targeting minorities. Examining reporting over dog fighting, we can find that media used dog fighting to highlight the supposed abnormal nature of pit bulls and the criminal associations of blacks, ghettos and pit bulls, especially as contrasted with white normality. But the elevated status of canines effected how such portrayals were perceived and outcomes for pit bulls as a targeted breed.

#### Race in in Dog Fighting Origins and the Historic Practice of Animalizing

According to Heidi Nast in her study of race and dog fighting, "Pit bulls, Slavery, and

Whiteness in the Mid to Late 19th century US,”<sup>110</sup> dog fighting has been portrayed by the media as originating in the black community, but in fact has its roots specifically as a white sport in creation and practice. She notes that pit bull breeding and dog fighting had traditionally been a past time of white men in Britain, who brought pit bulls to the U.S. in the nineteenth century,<sup>111</sup> where they introduced dog fighting as a strictly segregate sport, one that was often used to, in Nast’s words, establish “race purity” through the emphasis on selective breeding, inherited markers, homogeneity, and strict segregation of the sport as a white event. This connection with racial superiority, she asserts, continued into the twentieth century with the pit bull being used as a symbol of Western military imperialism, from post cards to posters.<sup>112</sup> The spectacle of dog fighting thus had racial overtones, and Nast notes that in the early twentieth century the dogs were sometimes set up to “fight” black men. These were instances of traditional animalization that positioned black men as animals, in the act of supposedly pitting one animal against another.

Thus, Nast finds the contemporary storyline of dog fighting to be a creation of modern media, one made with racializing intentions. She states, “...‘White’ media... imply that dogfighting is something carried out mostly by men of color,” although she notes its

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<sup>110</sup> Heidi J. Nast, “Pit Bulls, Slavery, and Whiteness in the Mid to Late 19th century US: Geographical Tied to Trajectories, Primary Sources,” *Critical Animal Geographies, Politics, Intersections and Hierarchies in a Multispecies World* (London: Routledge, 2015): 128-129.

<sup>111</sup> Nast, “Pit Bulls, Slavery and Whiteness,” 127.

<sup>112</sup> Nast, “Pit Bulls, Slavery and Whiteness,” 138. Nast notes, “After the U.S. join the war in 1917, a new postcard was issued depicting the dog in the US Navy uniform, an army division that President Theodore Roosevelt had expanded as part of his imperial ambitions....”

continued practice in many areas of the U.S. by white people. Nast also finds racial overtones in the contemporary condemnation of dog fighting, where she finds the concern is on supposed animal welfare, but the target is black men and their character. As she notes, black men who utilized the pit bull in ways other than as pets in the 1980s and 1990s were doing so for economic and physical survival<sup>113</sup>, not because of any inherent cruelty on their part or cultural mal-adaptions. Nast asserts that in this, the dogs were being used in ways similar to their use by white working class in the nineteenth century, i.e., for economic betterment. In the contemporary depiction of dog fighting, associated by the media only with black men and with abnormal character despite its long and varied geographical and culture history, Nast finds racist othering of black men as outside of white “humane” normality.

#### Dog Fighting and Modern Otherizing by Animal Treatment

To value animals in their own right, over the personhoods, or the culture, of a minority group, has been suggested as a modern mechanism for racializing and otherizing minority groups. Although incidents of tensions over animal value over human value have been found before, the basis of those tensions were often based on animals’ economic value.

<sup>114</sup> As anti-cruelty laws were gradually established from the Regency period onward, there was controversy over animals’ receiving greater legal protections than some subgroups of

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<sup>113</sup> Nast, “Pit Bulls, Slavery and Whiteness,” 139.

<sup>114</sup> In *A History of Attitudes and Behaviors toward Animals in Eighteenth- and Nineteenth-Century Britain*, Rob Boddice refers to the tensions between landless farm hands and increasingly valued specially bred animals expressed itself in working class ire towards these animals and rites of animal cruelty to release these tensions, the archetype of which was public bull baiting. Such baitings were seasonal events, with a valuable bull supplied by the lord of the manor or other high status member of society. Bulls were tormented to death.



human. However, this cannot be equated with a repositioning of canines and other animals over humans, or as humans themselves. Instead it reflected the patriarchal structure of society, which dictated how and who should be protected under the law.

In Monica Flegel's work, "'Bend or Break': Unraveling the Construction of Children and Animals as Competitors in Nineteenth- Century English Anti-Cruelty Movements,"<sup>115</sup> she details the controversy in the nineteenth century of animals receiving some legal protections, when children had none, to the extent that the RSPCA was called upon to advocate for a child unprotected under any other standing except as an "animal." However, what might appear to be a repositioning of human and animal was instead an assertion of the patriarchal ideal. Animals were considered in need of protection, especially from abuse by lower-class persons, under the guidance of society's evolved elite. In contrast, to propose that children needed protection from their own parents, i.e., their guardians and superiors, was a violation of hierarchical society and the idealized home. As workers were also considered charges of their benevolent employers, workers too theoretically needed no legal protections, and did not deserve additional rights. Thus, the lack of minority or class protections at the time did not reflect a repositioning of society based on an animal's own value, which was well-established in the social and religious cosmology as beneath Man's.

However, an examination of the controversy of dog fighting finds questions of animal treatment that center on the animal's innate value, rather than that of a minority, and reflect changes in animal, particularly canine, value. Researchers Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch, Jody

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<sup>115</sup> Monica Flegel, "'Bend or Break': Unraveling the Construction of Children and Animals as Competitors in Nineteenth- Century English Anti-Cruelty Movements," *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, Issue 1 (2009): vii.

Emel, in their work, “Race, Place and Bounds of Humanity,”<sup>116</sup> find animal treatment as practiced by minorities can be used as a means of racializing and otherizing. State the authors, “Animal practices are a powerful basis for creating difference and hence racialization – they serve as defining moments in the social construction of the human-animal divide....”<sup>117</sup> “ This construction of normalcy places supposed white values as the standard of normalcy: “animal practices, interpreted as “out of place” by dominant groups, position subaltern groups at the very edge of humanity. These groups are racialized and dehumanized through a complicated set of associations that measure their distance from civilization and the ideals of white America.”<sup>118</sup>

Of the role of dog fighting, they note, “dog-fighting among youth in inner-city communities of color, can place all people of color on the far side of the human-animal boundary. When problematic practices occur in racialized and marginalized places, such as the ghetto, the prospects of racialization on the basis of animal practices rise higher.”<sup>119</sup>

#### Dog Fighting and Placement on Social/Evolutionary Ladder

Nast concludes that this process was used in the pillaring of NFL quarterback Michael Vick, who was charged with owning an illegal dog-fighting business in 2007. The use of dogs for gambling events, where injuries were inflicted upon them, the stark living

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<sup>116</sup> Glen Elder, Jennifer Wolch, and Jody Emel, “Race, Place and Bounds of Humanity,” *Society and Animals*, Volume 6, Number 2 (Cambridge: White Horse Press, 1998).

<sup>117</sup> Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Race, Place and Bounds of Humanity,” 184.

<sup>118</sup> Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Race, Place and Bounds of Humanity,” 185.

<sup>119</sup> Elder, Wolch, and Emel, “Race, Place and Bounds of Humanity,” 199.

conditions they were kept in, and the killing of dogs not useful in the ring, were all transgressions of proper treatment of canines that broke social codes and placed the dogs' keepers outside of proper society. Nast maintains this placement was inevitably tied to race, where Vick's and other black men's role in dog fighting allowed them to be characterized by race, again as abnormal or demonic. She states, "The condition of the dogs was used as proof that there was monstrous, and unsympathetic figure whose fundamentally depraved nature led him to a love a blood sports (brought 2013; Massey 2012). In doing so, the media drew on centuries of racist depictions of black men as uncivilized, in this case, lower than the dogs that had once been used against them."<sup>120</sup>

Here Nast asserts two race-based narratives emerging from the rescue of pit bulls from dog fighting – one narrative for blacks as demon-like participants in the dogs' cruel victimization, and thus lower in status on the evolutionary and social ladder than the dogs themselves, and the other narrative of rescue as a white peoples' endeavor, one showing mercy and proper social values, and thus placing whites higher in status on the evolutionary and social ladder. She states, "Following Michael Vick's arrest, the media instead of tended to the innocence and a proper state of the dogs as proof of the moral decrepitude of Vick and others in his dog-fighting circles. The media also showed great interest in documenting the white heroism of state and nonprofit actors involved in various exercises of rescue. A slew of stories hence ensued about adoptions and rehabilitation, whiteness becoming bathed in a light of moral goodness."<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Nast, "Pit bulls, Slavery and Whiteness," 140.

<sup>121</sup> Nast, "Pit bulls, Slavery and Whiteness," 141.

The use of humane animal treatment to establish white identity as morally superior and based on Christian ethics and Western rationality, is historic and has been discussed. The identity of whiteness, particularly in the context of “proper society” (i.e. not poor or lower-class) was a factor in the gradual outlawing of dog fighting as not in keeping with white western morality. However, Erin Tarver asserts that when whites are involved in the use of animals, even their abuse, then animal mis-use was not categorized as improper. She states, “It is, however, telling to note the difference between Americans’ general response to the cruelty of dogfighting, and the cruelty of, say, the making of foie gras, the cruelty involved in its production is never met with the level of outrage on the part of the general public produced by the Vick dogfighting case – indeed, it often not registered as cruelty at all.”<sup>122</sup>

#### Pet Status and Proper Use of the Dog

Here Tarver considers the difference between duck-abuse and dog abuse but does not note its underlying reasoning; being mean to a duck is just considered cruel whereas dog-abuse is considered a crime against basic humanity, because dogs are considered legitimate members of human society. In contemporary Western society, even strays or occupants of animal pounds are considered pets, within society, but ones who need to be placed in homes, proper households and given their appropriate social markers (leashes, licenses). Again, these geographic locations, physical and social, are critical for the social role given to canines, and laws, ordinances, institutions, significant government budget allocations and charitable

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<sup>122</sup> Tarver, “The Dangerous Individual(s) Dog,” 280.

endowments exist to accomplish this end.<sup>123</sup> Pivotal, dogs who cannot be placed in a home or permanently institutionalized are, controversially, euthanized, rather than be left ownerless/homeless and as social outcasts, which is considered more inhumane. The social goal is for all dogs to be pets, and they are considered so unless powerful factors, such as an anti-breed mania, occurs to remove a dog from pet status.

The result is general tension over any misuse of dogs. Tarver suggests that animal practices useful to society, especially the dominant white group, normalizes practices which could also be considered cruel but are not because they are not tainted by association with supposedly infected minorities, i.e., white people's use/mis-use of animals is not considered abusive because it is done by white people. This position aligns with Nast's viewpoint. However, simply being associated with whites does not remove the controversy of use of canines outside of the definition of pet.

There are numerous examples of outrages over different uses of canines involving white people – such as greyhound racing and dog sledding, both of which are considered potentially abusive and result in canine fatalities.<sup>124</sup> Both activities have been the subjects of protests and legal action. From Nast's statements as to the "innocence" of rescued former

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<sup>123</sup> In fiscal year 2018, the operating expenses of the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was \$178,549,000. Estimated amount spent by all humane organizations annually is \$2.5 billion. [https://www.asPCA.org/sites/default/files/asPCA\\_audited\\_financial\\_statement\\_2018.pdf](https://www.asPCA.org/sites/default/files/asPCA_audited_financial_statement_2018.pdf); "Pets by the Numbers (2014)," Animal Sheltering, [https:// www.animalsheltering.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers](https://www.animalsheltering.org/page/pets-by-the-numbers).

<sup>124</sup> Numerous charities and animal rights organizations have advocating ending both activities after canine deaths. For example, the recent article by Matta Busby, "Charities call for end to greyhound racing after 1,000 deaths in a year," *The Guardian*, June 16, 2019. [https:// www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/jun/16/charities-call-for-end-to-greyhound-racing-after-1000-deaths-in-a-year](https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2019/jun/16/charities-call-for-end-to-greyhound-racing-after-1000-deaths-in-a-year).

dog-fighting pit bulls, they are clearly aligned with their white rescuers. In other words, they are identified as misused pets. This is a diametrically opposite viewpoint of the pit bull fighting dog as a social menace and subject of mania and public safety campaigns. What explains this divergence of viewpoint of the pit bull? I assert that the lynch pin for the pit bull's depiction and treatment is the pit bull's *own* identity: is the pit bull a pet, or is it "black?" If the dog is a pet, it is being mis-used, and if it is "black," then it is responsible for its own use/mis-use.

### Dog Identity as Pet or Black in Dog Fighting

The divergence of narratives on pit bulls used for or rescued from dog fighting is based on their identity; in short, when pit bulls are pets, their use in dog fighting is outside of the construct of pets, and they are victims and "innocents." There were historic factors that stripped a dog of pet status, such as loss of social markers like proper geographical placement in housing and in neighborhoods, and placement in proper households, i.e. "real" homes with "real" pet owners, and as discussed, many such markers were denied pit bulls because they were owned by black individuals or families living in in black neighborhoods. Whether loss of social markers alone would have been enough to strip pit bulls of pet status is unproven/unseen, but it likely made them more vulnerable to being mischaracterized. When pit bulls were associated with sensationalized coverage of black crime and drug use, their placement in society, i.e., around "good" people, became highly contentious. However, sentiment over dog fighting is even more radicalized, because it is tangled with questions over whether pit bulls are essentially criminal, abnormal and pathological, coded words that

equate to blackness. When pit bulls were considered tainted with blackness, they were deemed a social menace, especially to white, supposedly “normal,” society.

Examining the breed specific campaigns that have been examined against the spitz, the dachshund and the pit bull, their basis is the supposed safeguarding of such normality. As noted by Schiavone, Tarver and others, such public safety campaigns are ineffective and not truly aimed at minimizing threats to public health, but rather threats to the public good, i.e. structure, standing and membership. They are driven by manias centered around normality as belonging, often based on race or ancestry, and they have little to do with animal well-being or actual threats of animal attacks. For example, as noted by Schiavone, other breeds have been labeled as the “worst” or most dangerous breed of the moment<sup>125</sup> yet they have not engendered “manias” or supposed public safety campaigns. Such campaigns are aimed at the “other,” the minority. When breeds are associated with minorities during periods of stress, they are vulnerable to being targeted for such campaigns. The more humanized canines become, the greater their capacity to be considered as humans, to be held to human standards, the greater their capacity to be receptacles for human bias.

As Nast notes, there was an uptick in pit bull’s reputation once they began to be adopted by whites. When some, primarily white, rescuers decided that pit bulls *were* pets, they promoted them as pets, created programs to educate the public on pit bulls as pets, and fought against the tide of anti-pit bull legislation. Being re-aligned with whites allowed pit bulls to NOT be aligned with blackness, and so resume pet identity. The dynamics that allow pit bulls to resume pet identity also allowed them to take on black identity rather than just

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<sup>125</sup> Schiavone, “Barking Up,” 20.

being a proxy and scapegoat for this targeted minority. It allowed them to take on human standards of behavior, and to be subject to racial bias.



## Chapter 9

### Conclusion

We can find common threads between the examined breed discrimination episodes – the Mad Dog Scare, the anti-Dachshund Campaign of WWI, and the Pit Bull Crisis – and they are 1) the association of a breed with minority during a period of social stress, when scapegoating of outsiders is more likely; 2) the use in some measure of a breed as a proxy for some danger outside of proper society; and 3) that they had little to do with actual physical safety of the public, but were framed as for the public good. However, differences in the campaigns are also notable: how canines could be used in these breed-specific campaigns, and how they were perceived, changed as canine status changed. Thus, we must include the canine's cultural history as a factor in such campaigns.

From the possible nativist motivations of the Spitz Mania to the military propaganda campaign against the dachshund, and finally to the pit bull panic, the common thread has been anti-minority bias, whether nativist or racial. But we can see in an examination of these campaigns the development of ideas of animal value, particularly canine value. The ability of the target of the most recent campaign, the pit bull, to take on social identities is a result of this changing social value and humanizing, results in complex and sometimes conflicting notions/social outcomes, such as the criminalizing and even demonizing of pit bulls while their status as dogs made them the object of greater concern and sympathy in comparison to black men. The focus on spitzes as origins of disease certainly brought objections from those who loved dogs, and the persecution of dachshunds also brought objections based on the

violation of dog's role as "man's best friend" and a cherished family companion. The pit bull panic has brought questions of the value of a canine for itself, perhaps even in comparison to a human being, and clarified the pivotal factor of canine identity within context of "normality" and belonging to majority status as a factor in its targeting and redemption.

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