

Things to Think About: Domestication

Orlans, Barbara. “Turbo-Cows: Producing a Competitive Animal in the 19th and Early 20th Centuries.” *Industrializing Organisms: Introducing Evolutionary History*. Routledge. 2003.

Why does Orlans resist the tendency to understand the “high-yield” cow as a product of scientific research? What alternative does she suggest?

Does it make a difference that her research is based in Germany and Switzerland? How does her interpretation of the development of modern breeds compare with interpretations based in Britain or the US? How generalizable is her argument?

What does Orlans suggest about the relation between milk production and the environment in which the cows live? Why were Swiss and German dairy farmers disappointed with breeds imported from elsewhere in the 19th century?

What relation does Orlans suggest between the rationalization of livestock breeding and the emergence of centralized state bureaucracy?

Does Orlans’ discussion consistently support her assertion that breeds are a cultural construct?

Sarah Franklin, [Dolly Mixtures](#) (Duke University Press)

Franklin, Sarah. *Dolly Mixtures: The Remaking of a Genealogy*. Duke University Press. 2007. Chapters 2-3.

What connection does Franklin draw between livestock and profit?

How can Dolly be understood as a product of both cutting edge modern science and traditional agricultural practices?

What role does nationalism play in Franklin’s account?

How does Franklin explain the diversity of British sheep (that is, the number of recognizable breeds)?

Why does she think that the long history of sheep in Britain is essential to understanding Dolly’s significance?

What were the economic consequences of the new notions about breeding that emerged in the 18th century?

What was the relationship between quality (in terms of breed standards) and fertility in establishing valuable strains or breeds of livestock?

How did early breeders deal with biological limitations on their manipulation of animal bodies?

What does Franklin think that Dolly represented? What do you think that she represented?

Coppinger, Raymond and Lorna Coppinger. *Dogs: A New Understanding of Canine Origin, Behavior, & Evolution*. Scribner. 2001. Chapter 1.

What is their explanation for the emergence of dogs? Why do they emphasize the differences between dogs and wolves?

How would you characterize their tone? How would you explain it?

What is the alternative explanation against which they argue? Why do they call it "the Pinocchio Hypothesis"?

What timeline is implicit in their account of domestication? Why is there no comparison with the process of domesticating other animals (other than the Russian foxes)?

What is the source of their authority?

Why do they wish to confront Darwin?

Levy, Ariel. "Living Room Leopards." *The New Yorker*. May 6, 2013.

Why do people want domestic cats who resemble their large dangerous relatives? Why are they willing to pay so much for them? Why do they cost so much? Are the two previous questions the same or different?

How does the breeding process that produces Bengals compare with the process that produces breeds of livestock or lab animals?

Based on all of these readings, how would you define "breed"--or how would you recognize one?

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