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Chris Pearson, *Dogopolis: How Dogs and Humans Made Modern New York, London, and Paris*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2021. 259 pp. Figures, notes, and index. \$95.00 U.S. (cl). ISBN 9780226796994; \$24.00 U.S. (pb). ISBN 9780226798165; \$23.99 U.S. (eb). ISBN 9780226797045.

Review by Stephen L. Harp, University of Akron.

History has gone to the dogs. Chris Pearson situates this history of human love and fear of dogs at the nexus of urban history and the history of emotions. Focusing on London, New York, and Paris from the early nineteenth century into the 1930s, Pearson argues that human emotional connections to dogs significantly remolded those cities and others in contemporary Western Europe and the United States. “Dogopolis” emerged.

At root, Pearson is historicizing human beings’ relationship with dogs. In Western Europe and former European settler colonies, including the United States, dogs are today humans’ best friends. It was not always so, as the notion of a tight, inevitable and unchanging bond between humans and dogs is a mostly modern, even post-World War II creation. Pearson counters that essentialist and widespread assumption, tracking changing human emotions as regards dogs in urban centers. With careful attention to categories of class, gender, and race in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, he puts evolving human reactions to dogs in historical context.

In the early nineteenth century, many dogs were a threat. Many ran wild. They bit. They carried rabies. They shat in the street. Strays, associated with the dangerous working classes, poor, and (especially in New York) immigrants, engendered fear. At the same time, urban middle classes increasingly kept dogs as pets. These housebroken, domesticated, adored, and sometimes trained companions included everything from lapdogs to large dogs. For Pearson, the modern metropolis not only made place for dogs as pets, as well as for police dogs, but human approaches to dogs were powerful forces in shaping urban modernity itself. As he puts it, “A model of Western human-canine relations eventually emerged, which I call dogopolis” (p. 2).

Pearson’s primary source base makes this book both a series of comparative local histories as well as a broader transnational analysis of the similarities and differences of human perceptions of dogs within the three national contexts. He makes excellent use of the major newspapers from all three cities, as well as other published materials ranging from scientific works to dog manuals. Sources from the Archives de la Préfecture de Police in Paris, the London Metropolitan Archives, and the New York City Municipal Archives, as well as the American Society for the Prevention

of Cruelty to Animals in New York, allow him to provide fascinating, up-close detail about dogs and humans in all three cities.

Chapters are thematic and roughly chronological. In the first, Pearson considers strays. In 1800, most dogs in all three cities were strays. Increasingly, strays seemed a problem. Dog pounds appeared to deal with the rapid increase in dog populations. Pearson forcefully argues that ell-kept, well-bred, more evolved dogs that met the demands of middle-class fetishized cleanliness escaped death, while curs and mongrels associated with the dangerous classes of nineteenth-century cities did not. Evoking orientalism and empire, commentators also compared unleashed dogs with the wild pariahs of Constantinople and Indian cities.

In the second chapter, "Biting," Pearson provides a primer on muzzling, rabies, and the slow adoption of Louis Pasteur's rabies vaccine. The details are often surprising. For example, despite all of the stray dogs in Paris, rabies cases were few, particularly compared to the widespread fear of the disease. As interesting, nineteenth-century London actually had a serious problem with rabies; government-mandated muzzling and quarantining effectively stamped it out throughout the United Kingdom by 1900. And Pearson's accounts of heated debates about the effectiveness of Pasteur's vaccine will seem eerily familiar to readers all too aware of those today surrounding COVID-19 vaccines, despite overwhelming evidence of their effectiveness.

Chapter three takes up dogs' suffering and death, tracing the establishment and evolution of dog pounds as centers for the destruction of unwanted dogs. The desire to eliminate potentially rabid strays from the streets conflicted with Enlightenment notions of the necessity of humane treatment. Pearson covers the wide variety of methods of killing dogs, some of which were supposed to be humane. Here his analysis of class does much to explain the apparent contradiction of humane societies accepting, even overseeing, dogs' destruction; curs were culled, while the pampered pooches of the middle class normally found protection.

Entitled "Thinking," chapter four tracks the emergence of police dogs. Animals sometimes associated with lower-class crime thus became defenders of the public order. On the one hand, they were work dogs, not unlike the dogs who traditionally pulled rag-pickers' carts. On the other, they were highly trained and very well cared for, thus safe and clean like the beloved dogs of the middle class. Police dogs' association with middle-class dogs helped them gain public acceptance.

The book ends with a strong chapter on defecation. Dog mess had medicinal uses in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as "physicians used it as an astringent in the form of album graecum (dried and whitened canine excrement)" (p. 149). An antiseptic, some doctors even recommended it for sore throats. More often in the nineteenth century, the poor gathered it, often with their bare hands, as gloves were expensive and harder to clean, and sold it to tanneries, where tanners used it to scour and purify skins. However, new notions of hygiene combined with germ theory made clear the danger of pathogens in dog waste. At the same time, trams, subways, cars, and buses replaced horses; as horse manure began to disappear from streets, dog waste became more obvious. As motorized traffic increased, it was dangerous for dogs to relieve themselves in the street, despite exhortations for owners to curb their dogs. More dog poop ended up on sidewalks. Sewers removed human waste, so night soil gatherers no longer emptied cesspools into carts and hauled smelly contents through city streets. As streets got cleaner, dog mess stood out. In the interwar years, dog crap on city streets emerged as a problem, one not

resolved for decades. Before the development of impermeable, cheap plastic in the mid-twentieth century, middle-class dog owners resisted picking up after their dogs. New York did not get the poop scoop law until 1978. Paris followed in 2002.

A book this interesting leaves a reader wishing for more. For example, how would the story change if we included Germany in the analysis? Given Franco-German enmity through much of this period, I was a little surprised that widespread adoption of *bergers allemands* (German shepherds) as police dogs did not elicit comment in France. Similarly, since Pearson notes that a leading hygienist admired the cleanliness of Munich in particular (p. 172), I'd hoped for a bit more analysis of Berlin, Munich or another major German metropolis known for the lack of dog mess on the streets; even secondary sources might round out the picture. Finally, since Pearson makes much of these three cities as emblematic of something Western, more engagement with developments in human-canine relations outside Europe and North America might reinforce just how Western the changes tracked in this book were. Pearson is now studying dogs in India; given his expertise here, it will obviously be an excellent work.

Having been regaled with a pile of information about urban dogs, I want to add one last *crotte*. In some low-lying cities without much pitch for the new sewers constructed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, sewer lines were sometimes too narrow for a human to climb through and clean. Instead, dogs were put to work; with a cable attached to their collars, dogs ran from one manhole to another, dragging the cable with them, so that sewer workers could then use the cable to knock waste off the insides of pipes. Here, illustrating once more the ironies that Pearson highlights, an animal once seen as dirty helped to clean the modern city, much like police dogs helped to pursue crime. In Nice, middle-class foreign tourists' concerns that such *chiens égoutiers* were being abused led to an abandonment of the practice by the mid-twentieth century, but in Rennes, sewer dogs were still hard at work in 1982. The TF1 video clip about Rennes, now archived at the Inathèque, assured viewers that the dogs were cleaned, well-fed, and received *caresses*, thus making them more like middle-class pampered dogs than any dirty working-class dogs deemed dangerous decades earlier. [1]

I like this book. I'm not especially enamored with the term "dogopolis." I'm not yet fully convinced that human-canine relations were a crucial factor in the formation of modern urban living. When I compare changes in dog-keeping to the development of sewers, high-rises, or the replacement of horse-drawn vehicles with tramways, buses, and cars, urban dogs seem less significant to me. But no matter. Pearson clearly proves that dogs had a very different place in humans' lives in the twentieth-century city than they had in the eighteenth. That's plenty. Moreover, what makes this book so good is Pearson's eye for the telling detail, as he has delved deeply into local sources to give readers a unique feel of daily life for humans as well as dogs in all three cities during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Despite knowing better, I still often imagine the nineteenth-century city as it appears in Impressionist paintings. While I doubt I will use Pearson's neologism, I will surely remember much of what I learned in *Dogopolis*, in itself a worthy accomplishment.

## NOTES

[1] On Nice, see Stephen L. Harp, *The Riviera, Exposed: An Ecohistory of Postwar Tourism and North African Labor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2022), p. 99. On Rennes, see the TF1

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report “Les égoutiers de l'impossible,” on the Inathèque site: <https://www.ina.fr/ina-eclairer-actu/video/cpa8205229901/les-egoutiers-de-l-impossible>, accessed 18 December 2021.

Stephen L. Harp  
University of Akron  
[sharp@uakron.edu](mailto:sharp@uakron.edu)

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