

less clear. The fact that many of the period's "innovations" were gradual and followed the same general developmental path as in other parts of Northern Europe suggests that not all of the changes that took place in the wake of the Crusades were necessarily a *result* of the Crusades. Historically, there has been a scholarly tendency to focus on the initial phase of violent culture clash, conquest, and conversion; but this volume's nuanced exploration of how ordinary Livonians experienced a century and a half of quotidian change serves as a potent reminder of Johan Huizinga's observation that "history creates comprehensibility primarily by arranging facts meaningfully and only in a very limited sense by establishing strict causal connections" (*Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance* [1984], 55). I found this collection to be a thought-provoking contribution to the rich scholarship on medieval Livonia and a strong addition to Brill's *The Northern World* series.

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## **Bestialische Praktiken. Tiere, Sexualität und Justiz im frühneuzeitlichen Zürich**

**By Jose Cáceres Mardones. Vienna and Cologne: Böhlau, 2022. Pp. 343. Cloth €60.00. ISBN: 978-3412524906.**

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Jose Cáceres Mardones brings us into the world of seventeenth-century Zurich to confront the animal-human relationships that structured everyday rural life through the lens of bestiality prosecutions. The judicial treatment of bestiality in medieval and early modern Europe is an understudied phenomenon that is often subsumed into studies of sodomy, where it becomes an asterisk to research primarily focused on sex with humans. The so-called animal turn has encouraged scholars to look more closely at the prosecution of bestiality, and Cáceres Mardones follows this tradition by drawing on theoretical frameworks from animal studies to pursue his analysis. Though he specifies that the focus of this book is not the animals themselves, he cites concepts such as "co-history" in his analysis of bestiality, so that "both the animals and the people are understood as co-creators of bestiality and its historical appearance" (12, reviewer's translation).

In the first chapter, Cáceres Mardones anchors his work at the intersection of several fields of study: legal history related to the persecution of sodomy, heresy, and witchcraft; cultural history related to gender, masculinity, and sexuality; and social history related to early modern everyday life and the perception of time and space. Though anchored by broad historical questions, his study is still microhistorical through its concentration on the eighty-one cases of bestiality documented in Zurich between 1600 and 1700. Cáceres Mardones situates the prosecution of bestiality in this local context, where burgeoning state power allied with religious authorities tightened moral mandates as a bulwark against the divine punishment read in natural phenomena, from comets to crop failure. Chapter 2 examines the judicial processes at play, outlining the involvement of both state and church officials, with special attention paid to the role of the animals themselves. Despite being a capital offense in name, an analysis of the sentences recorded reveals a wide range of outcomes in addition to execution, including hospital stays and moral instruction for younger

offenders. Though the animals, usually cows or horses, were individualized through robust descriptions which show an interest in identifying the specific animal involved, court proceedings ultimately objectified them, as language “decoupled the animals from their material and emotional closeness to humans” (109).

Chapter 3 shows how bestiality was intertwined with the rhythms of rural society, as the spatiality, temporality, and sequentiality of the acts corresponded to the broader contours of life for both humans and animals. This analysis, as well as that of the following chapters, illustrates the value of these judicial records for understanding early modern daily life for animals and humans, and how judicial practice on the ground may have differed from what the law prescribed. In Chapter 4, we move from the realities of everyday rural life to the religious context that shaped understandings of bestiality. The author traces the discursive boundaries of the term in relation to sodomy and heresy and puts the language of prosecution in conversation with contemporary Protestant thought. Though state and ecclesiastical authorities saw great risk to individual salvation and community welfare, lighter sentences for younger offenders were justified with reference to their religious ignorance or diabolical instigation. Chapter 5 connects bestiality to early modern understandings of sexuality, masculinity, marriage, and adolescent socialization (by both animals and other humans). Though bestiality disrupted the perceived natural order of animal-human relationships, the perception of bestiality as revealed in witness statements, confessions, and court sentences fell within the established heteronormative gender order, where the animal took the place of a woman in relation to a man. Most offenders were unmarried men under the age of thirty, and their acts were seen as a failure to contain their sexual desire. Chapter 6 returns to the subject of everyday rural life to show how charges of bestiality ruptured the social existence of the accused, poisoning relationships between relatives, neighbors, and the larger village community.

One notable strength of this book is how it integrates large amounts of original text from court records into its prose, allowing the audience to intimately encounter the source material in its original form and language. Though Cáceres Mardones acknowledges the distance between constructed legal narratives and the unknowable reality of an actual event, he eliminates the space between the reader and the primary source. The author’s close reliance on the minutiae of the interrogations, confessions, expert opinions, and judgments included in the Zurich court records is combined with an analysis rooted in praxeology “which foregrounds the relationship between patterns of meaning and practice” (285). This praxeological analysis ultimately reveals bestiality to be deeply embedded in seventeenth-century society and teases cultural meanings out of the records of a taboo and condemnable practice. Like many studies of animals, the most compelling conclusions made in this book actually pertain to aspects of human culture as revealed through the study of animal-human dynamics.

Though this book connects bestiality to a wide range of topics, from the spatiality of animal-human interaction to the corporeality of sin, it is limited in scope. Much of the analysis is underpinned by close reading of a handful of cases, and even the full corpus of cases referenced is limited to a tight geographic and chronological range. Though the book’s methodology may necessitate its limited scope, one hopes this study will contribute to more cross-cultural works in the future as the study of this subject expands.

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