

CONSUMING ANIMALS IN PRINT: BEING A LIVE COW ON VICTORIAN CATTLE SHIPS

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Four figures look down from the deck of an anonymous ship, three human and one bovine who together make up the living contingent of a photograph captioned ‘Another view’ (figure 1). *Another view* featured in *Cattle Ships* (1890), a ‘notorious’ pamphlet published in London by British public figure Samuel Plimsoll in an effort to reform animal welfare practices in Britain’s food supply chain.¹ Cattle ships were seaborne vessels that were either custom built or adapted to transport live animals – usually cows, sometimes sheep and pigs – on transoceanic crossings. They were a particularly modern site of morality and fertile ground for exploring and extending Victorian Britons’ politics of interspecies relations and care. Visual representations of cattle ships are a useful and scanty addressed resource for considering the ethical complex that helped shape discussions around Britain’s beef supply chain in the late nineteenth century.

This article brings Plimsoll’s images into conversation with a contemporaneous pamphlet by Isabel M. Greg and S. H. Towers, called *Cattle Ships, and Our Meat Supply* (1894), which was illustrated with three diagrams of an American cattle ship. Images were a core component of Plimsoll’s publication too, which is peppered with photographic and engraved pictures that depict various elements of the late nineteenth-century British meat supply and its recently established connections to North America’s cattle trade. Within both publications, I am concerned with the circulation of images and bodies, for implicit in printed depictions of cattle ships that crossed and referred to the Atlantic Ocean, are the transformations experienced by the bodies of bovine passengers at sea and once again on land, where they were slaughtered. Over two sections, the first focussed on dockyards and the second aboard ship, I consider how the intersecting concerns of humanitarian character, diet and technological change related to

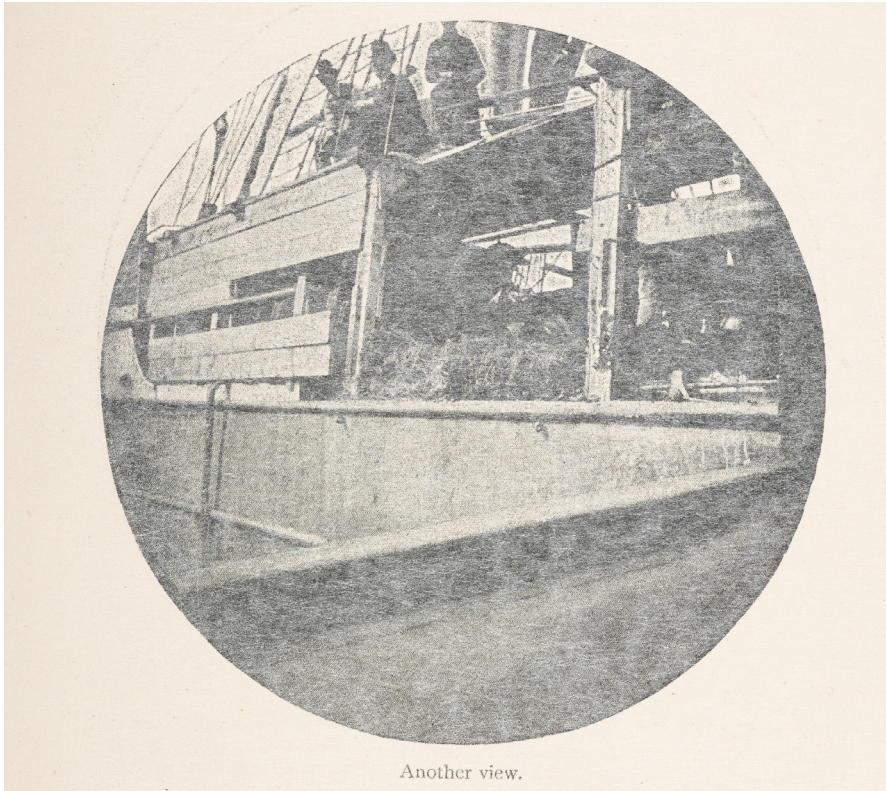


Figure 1 Mr Barratt, *Another View*, c. 1890. Halftone print on paper, 9.2cm diameter. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8807.c.38. Photo: The British Library.

depictions of cows aboard cattle ships. By studying the material construction of and nuanced shifts between specific print-based practices, I show that the cows' likenesses were made through absence, primarily of light and of ink. Through this, I ask what it means for an animal's live form to be represented by a lack of matter and how this shapes their becoming 'edible'. It is my contention that the illustrated pamphlets demonstrate an ambivalence to nonhuman suffering that attempted to balance care for nonhuman life with its containment and eventual curtailment.

The 1890s was a pivotal decade in terms of Britain's live cattle imports as quantities were at their utmost and regulations came under greater scrutiny.

Cattle shipping routes had changed quickly from the mid-nineteenth century, and by the 1890s, animals and sailors had to endure journeys of greater distance and risk. Britain had long imported cows for meat from continental Europe and Ireland, the latter trade initiated as early as the sixteenth century, but industrialisation and population growth in nineteenth-century Britain meant that food imports grew throughout the century.² Concomitantly, the notion of diseased meat and food poisoning was an emerging concern for British consumers.³ This spiked during the 1860s and '70s' episodes of 'cattle plague' and 'bovine scourge' in Europe that turned British importers towards other international sources.⁴ In 1868, the first American shipment of live cows landed in Britain, which was a speculative export by Chicago cattle trader, Nelson Morris, in the midst of European attempts to stymie the spread of disease.⁵ Within three decades, the USA and Canada provided the majority of live cattle landed in Britain; Richard Perren notes that from 1890-94, nearly seventy percent of live cattle imported to Britain originated in the USA.⁶ In that context, it is significant that Plimsoll, Greg and Towers sought to reform the burgeoning North American supply right at its peak.

As many nineteenth-century writers noted, the Atlantic crossing that the American cattle ships followed had historical precedents and some writers drew comparisons with the transatlantic slave trade. Towards the end of this article, I consider how visual representations of Britain's beef supply interacted with the nation's self-proclaimed humanitarian ethos regarding the visual legacies of abolitionist print culture. This comparison between the slave trade and cattle imports was used in attempts to stop or criticise the movement of live cattle, which many argued should be replaced by refrigerated products. Importantly, while the American live animal trade grew during this period, it was newly possible to transport 'dead meat' thanks to improvements in refrigeration technologies, or 'artificial cold'.⁷ The first cargo of frozen meat landed in London on the *Dunedin* from Australia, in 1882, after which the global trade in frozen and chilled meat developed alongside that of live animals.⁸

Refrigeration was thought to have applications for welfare reform more widely and both pamphlets promulgated coldness as a means of liberating meat animals from suffering as part of wider humanitarian activism. 'Humanitarianism' was a slippery concept in the period in which a myriad of social reform movements, generally non-governmental, operated

domestically and abroad. Davide Rodogno notes that in early nineteenth-century Britain and France, humanitarianism was associated with anti-slavery movements, only to become more broadly related to the provision of relief and intervention in international atrocities later in the century.⁹ On a domestic scale, humanitarianism encompassed such aims as those to reform prisons or workhouses.¹⁰ In terms of this article, ‘humanitarian’ equates to the preservation of life and protection from harm. Plimsoll’s *Cattle Ships* was concerned with sailors’ working conditions and the welfare provided to bereaved families, in which nonhumans’ lives were not prized but were nonetheless essential to his argument. Greg and Towers, however, were published by The Humanitarian League, a loose collective of activists founded by Henry S. Salt who aimed to afford humane principles to ‘all sentient beings’.¹¹ Throughout its history, the League condemned Britain’s corporal punishment, called for educational reform, supported pacifism and animal rights and regularly published tracts on the benefits of a ‘natural diet’, or vegetarianism. As such, its *Cattle Ships, and Our Meat Supply* focused more on the fate of nonhumans. Despite their differences, however, both pamphlets had a shared belief that refrigeration technologies could be a tool of humane social conduct with benefits for humans and nonhumans. Even according to the Humanitarian League, refrigeration was the option ‘to which humanitarians can give comparative encouragement, on account of its being free from the objections connected with the live cattle trade’.¹² This sentiment conveys the tension at the heart of both campaigns and various public responses, in that there was a tacit understanding, even for a vegetarian organisation, that cows were an assemblage of edible products who nonetheless deserved protection from bodily harm. It is my contention that this ethical strain is apparent in the application of particular media to depict cattle ship cows.

In the dockyard

By the 1890s, many imported commodities passed inland through Britain’s ports, which The Humanitarian League considered ‘dark places of the earth’.¹³ Nonetheless, Britain’s waterside locales facilitated the country’s growing dependence on foreign animal products, a fact that some found cause for concern, such as William J. Gordon’s book *How London Lives* opens with a chapter on the capital’s food supply. He described a Britain

besieged by its appetite, remarking that ‘the country cannot exist without the colonist or the foreigner, for Britain alone of the kingdoms of the world feeds on more than it can grow, and only lives as the citadel of an ocean empire’.¹⁴

Besides chauvinistic anxiety about import of foreign perishable goods, there was a humanitarian case against cattle ships due to the perilous conditions for all on board. The vessel in *Another View* is a cattle ship or, more specifically, an ordinary cargo ship made to carry cattle within temporary sheds, docked at port. Mr Barratt, a reporter based in New York like Henry D. Plimsoll, Samuel’s brother who had commissioned him, took the photograph. In the late nineteenth century, the Plimsoll brothers collaborated to collect ‘data’ about the practices of deck overloading on steamships operating between New York and British ports.¹⁵ This was a continuation of the work that Samuel Plimsoll, known as the ‘Sailor’s Friend’, did in the 1870s to improve the working conditions of sailors endangered by excessive cargo which weighed down vessels and made them unsteady at sea. Two decades later, Plimsoll’s cattle ship cause recognised the shared plight of humans and nonhumans exposed to dangerous transoceanic travel. In *Another View*, wooden sheds cover the top deck while the bulwarks, the extension of a ship’s sides above the level of the deck, are visibly over-built, meaning the new deck level had no protective barrier. The composition represents the ship as materially bisected between the solid metal hull and a flimsy confluence of differing materials and gaps that encase and elevate the living bodies seen in the image’s top half, seated beyond the protection of the bulwarks.

Though *Cattle Ships* explains the shared peril of the multispecies passengers aboard, the images reveal the animals’ additional confinement. In particular, the motif of a disembodied cow’s head glimpsed through a gap in a ship’s superstructure occurs several times. This is perhaps related to Plimsoll’s claim that photography of the cattle was prohibited in the New York dockyard.¹⁶ Plimsoll did not mention by whom or why animal photography was prohibited, but this detail partly explains why cows’ bodies are made visible precisely through the representation of cattle ship architecture, in lieu of bodies in their own right. In *Another view*, the only photographic image in *Cattle Ships* to include a live animal, the truncated bovine figure at the centre of the halftone image is barely distinguishable from their surroundings.¹⁷ Framed by the shed’s built structure, head silhouetted, they peer out from within

the shed. The cow's indistinct form is a direct consequence of mistreatment, as the confined conditions of their transport prevented sufficient light from entering the hold to allow the photographic film to capture their likeness. While the monochrome shape of the bodily outline is due to openings on both sides of the temporary sheds that enabled light to cast around the edges of the cow's body, the darkness of their confinement meant that their facial features were not exposed to the photographic negative. The camera, which produces images through the exposure of light on a light-sensitive film, was always already incapable of capturing the confined cow's personal features; instead their likeness is constructed from an absence, in this instance, of light. This absence, however, is part of the material of the image, for it signals the supposedly objective nature of the photographic process: the 'pencil of nature' that mechanically recorded what was in front of it, not supplemented by artistic design.

This apparent belief in the agency of camera equipment to record details faithfully is underscored by Plimsoll's multiple references to Barratt's 'amateur' photographer status.¹⁸ Further, the circular format of the photographs was likely due to the Kodak camera that Barratt probably used, the very first of which sold in America in 1888, which used film printed in a circular format.¹⁹ This equipment was cheap, simple to operate and has been attributed with the 'rise of amateur photography' and the notion of the 'snapshot'.²⁰ It was the mechanism that supposedly made the image, not the person holding the camera, and therefore could be considered as objective, a supposition that was central to Plimsoll's use of visual material. As *Cattle Ships* was produced to support Plimsoll's attempts to pass a new anti-deck loading bill through Parliament in 1891, the medium's perceived objectivity was crucial to what he considered to be the 'pressing urgency' of his work.²¹ Several contemporary reviewers responded positively to the prominence of photography. For instance, *The Standard* asserted that 'facts (and photographs) do not lie: and there are enough of both in Mr. Plimsoll's brochure to show the imperative necessity for prompt and stringent legislation'.²² Others agreed that the photographs were 'irrefragable evidence' that lent credibility to his argument.²³ Plimsoll did not reserve copyright on these images and actually encouraged editors to reprint them out of context, which demonstrates his belief in their testimonial use as part of a wider print culture.²⁴ That is not to take Plimsoll's assumptions for granted, however. Rather, I suggest that the

methods used to reproduce the photographs complicate the contested notion of photography's objectivity.²⁵

The images Plimsoll used, the sources of which were diffuse and occasionally unattributed, were subject to what I call a media conversion, being a series of abstractions and material extractions variously imposed on cows' forms in order to bring them to print. In the case of *Another View*, the cow's indistinct form is abstracted further by the methods used to reproduce the photographs, as *Cattle Ships* was printed with the halftone technique. This process creates the illusion of continuous tone through binary application of ink in miniscule amounts as little as 0.16mm in thickness. Thus, the printed image seen by the human eye, in which the dotted formation becomes blended at an ideal 'practical distance', presents a further abstraction of the cow's bodily shape, which is initially rendered as a series of positive and negative tones through photographic exposure.²⁶ Through these stages of mechanical conversion, the cow's body appears through negative tones, blinded and muted, their form constituted only through the architectural structure that confines them. Unlike the tonally-varied human bodies above, the cow's silhouette, flattened through the print conversion, is subsumed into captivity.

Ten pages later in *Cattle Ships*, a similar cow head silhouette appears in another example of how the particularities of, and movement between, visual media help to constitute the appearance of nonhuman animals (figure 2). Though this second image is evidently hand drawn, the caption's assertion that it 'was taken in New York' associates the engraving with photography's truth claim.²⁷ As with the halftone print, the photographic image has been abstracted, but in another way. Engraving techniques reduce tonality to linear marks, which become less densely etched between the centre and edges of the image. Tight cross-hatching on the bulwarks develops a contrast with the cattle shedding shown in the lighter areas. The densest area of pigment is reserved for the shedding's interior where a cow's head looks out over the dockyard. However, unlike *Another view*, and even unlike the officer positioned on the bridge, this cow was afforded facial features through the print technique: an eye, though small, is visible (figure 2a).

For some commentators, being observed by another animal is an avenue to self-reflexive consideration of human experience and knowledge related to being seen or misunderstood.²⁸ Others have, less anthropocentrically,

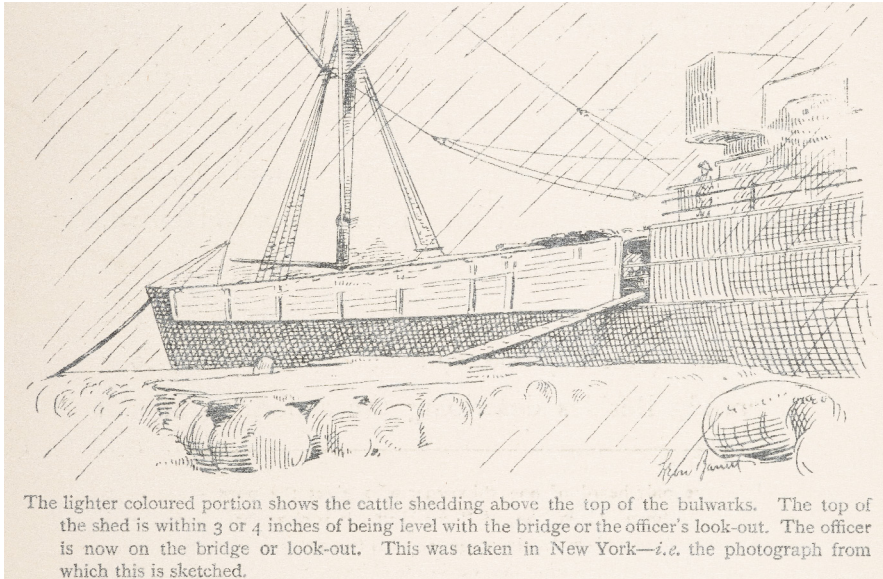


Figure 2 Unknown artist (Mr Barratt?), untitled, c. 1890. Half-tone printed engraving on paper, 11.2 x 6.5cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8807.c.38. Photo: The British Library.

conceived of the eye as a means to recognise nonhuman animals' subjectivity. For instance, Jonathan Burt posits the idea of the 'eye-image' as a detail that reveals the capacity for other animals' self-determination.²⁹ Burt's suggestion was prefigured by Victorian sculptor and natural history artist Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins who instructed that animals' eyes are the most visually eloquent part of their anatomy.³⁰ Still today, nonhumans' facial features appear prominently in animal rights campaigns. Keri Cronin suggests that twenty-first-century animal rights advocates can 'learn' from the images made between 1870-1914 and encourages images to focus on 'imaginative' elements such as 'a "rabbit's-eye" (or dog's-eye, or mink's-eye, or cow's eye)'.³¹ Elsewhere, Erica Fudge notes the importance of sight to animal rights of the 1990s, suggesting that to look into the eyes of another animal elicits a moment of interspecies recognition.³² Yet this has its own problematics of speciesism and anthropomorphism, which Lori Gruen refers to as the 'sameness response', the tendency of humans to seek similarities with other animals.³³ Instead, Gruen proposes 'entangled empathy' in which difference

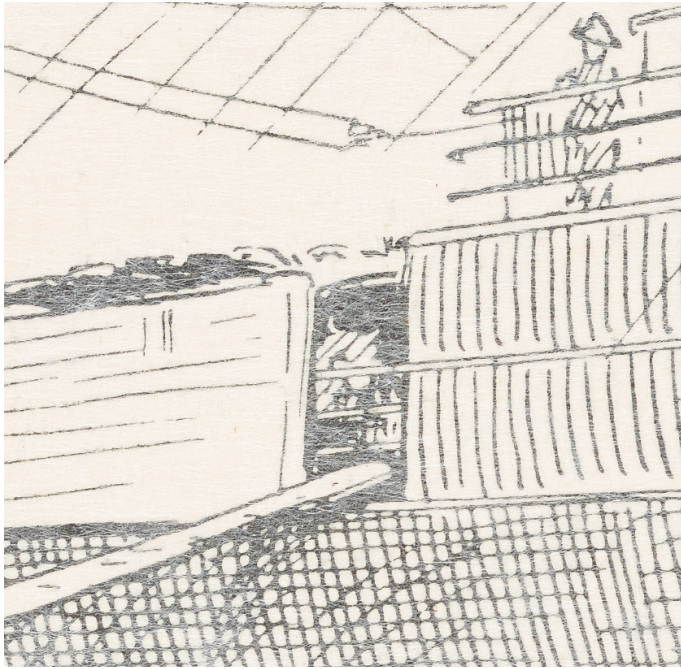


Figure 2a Unknown artist (Mr Barratt?), untitled (detail), c. 1890. Halftone printed engraving on paper, 0.4 x 1cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8807.c.38. Photo: The British Library.

is not elided yet, nonetheless, empathy ensures that another's perspective is prioritised before the viewer's own.³⁴

Gruen's feminist ethics aligns with my contention that the next set of images, located aboard ships, require thinking through distance rather than difference. 'Distance' has specific conceptual potential in the way that it evokes the suggestion of a space extending between two or more points, an interval or a dissociation, which is inherently relational. Donna Haraway warns against distancing ourselves from nonhuman beings, 'all of whom make life for humans what it is - and vice versa', whereas Michael Allen Fox urges that 'distance' denotes detachment *and* responsibility and is thus a useful means to disrupt anthropocentrism.³⁵ Though it does not foreclose the significance of difference, distance is a way of thinking with and about other animals without resorting to binary constructs in which, Steve Baker argues, nonhumans embody pejorative qualities.³⁶ Scholars working in this

vein have shown how the division of 'human' from 'animal' is historically constructed and continually shifts in ways that allow cultural anxieties and desires to manifest.³⁷

For John Berger, the ravages of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century were evinced by humans' alienation from other animals.³⁸ Nonetheless, however marginalised animal death became from Victorian public life, this did not arrest public disgust towards slaughterhouses, nor the social significance of anti-cattle ship campaigns. As radical vegetarian Josiah Oldfield argued in reference to Plimsoll's campaign, British consumers needed to acknowledge 'the cruelties [of cattle ships] that precede the final act' of butchery.³⁹ For Oldfield and others, to uphold these particular types of violence precluded the possibility of a truly humane society, stating that 'by parity of reasoning, [it is] well-nigh impossible to abolish many other acts of injustice that we see everywhere around us'.⁴⁰ Oldfield's point that animal rights are inextricable from humanitarian ethics reflects a wider public response to Plimsoll's campaign that acknowledged the cows' plight through comparison with the trade of enslaved humans. As such, in the next section on images that depict the cows' journey, I consider how the 'middle passage' was invoked in response to anti-cattle shipping. This has ramifications for understanding the movement between schematic and figurative images that Plimsoll and the Humanitarian League used in their pamphlets.

Aboard ship

The 'cattle-ships of the present day reproduce, in an aggravated form, some of the worst horrors of the slave-ship', stated Henry S. Salt, founder of the Humanitarian League, in 1896.⁴¹ Salt was not alone in his conclusion. Rather, his pronouncement reflected the way that the eighteenth-century Abolitionist movement was significant to the public reception and discussion of Plimsoll's anti-cattle shipping campaign in 1890. The dire conditions and route of the transatlantic cattle trade invited many of Plimsoll's contemporaries to draw comparisons with slave ships, which were frequently alluded to in anti-cattle ship texts by references to 'the middle passage'.⁴² One writer went so far as to assert that '[w]hat the middle-passage was to the kidnapped African in the days of the slave trade, the Atlantic passage is to American and Canadian beeves of the present time'.⁴³ When used in reference to the slave trade, 'middle passage' signifies the seaborne journey of enslaved Africans as they

were forcibly transported across the Atlantic to the West Indies, during which thousands of people died. While the nineteenth-century allusions explicitly referred to the since-abolished slave trade, the ‘middle passage’ was geographically inverted from this context when applied to cattle ships, which actually reversed the route’s direction, heading away from the American continents. Indeed, in some cases the association of the Atlantic Ocean with the ‘middle passage’ was disregarded, as the term was cited in respect to the cattle trade between Ireland and England, which crossed the Irish Sea.⁴⁴ This suggests that rather than having a geographical specificity, to cite the ‘middle passage’ was also to imply a generalised condition of deathly, overcrowded maritime transportation.

Though invoked in the nineteenth century in order to extend welfare across species lines, the equivalence of the lives and experiences of enslaved humans with those of animals, particularly animals destined to be eaten, carries layers of violence.⁴⁵ Most importantly, the comparison doubles down on ideological constructions of non- and sub-humanness as a precondition of exploitation, which is indivisible from Britain’s imperial context. Empire, as Neel Ahuja observes, ‘anthropomorphises the human’.⁴⁶ Yet, the way that Abolitionism was referenced in response to cattle ships was itself a recognition of British consumers’ complicity in others’ suffering. Particularly telling is the way the two campaigns shared a conceptual alignment of live bodies with capital. As such, the representation of cows in cattle ship contexts contributes to how we view and understand the right to life in modernity.⁴⁷

The assumed fate of the cows’ bodies to become consumer products is apparent in both pamphlets, as cows are shown both as and alongside cargo through schematic visual strategies. On the cover, and printed twice more within the text of *Cattle Ships*, is a sidelong view of a steamship with two chunks of its hull excavated to reveal the ship’s contents (figure 3). An irregular line forms the edges of each cutaway to demonstrate that it is a visual device and not an element of the ship’s design. Humped shapes are arranged neatly in three tiers along the ship’s interior and, according to related text, these indistinct forms represent cattle mid-journey. Even though a series of precise lines and careful shading show the ship’s architecture, the cattle are crooked, bipedal and headless against the dark hold, a vacant space formed by the background areas gouged from a woodcut surface. Plimsoll represented cattle as material products in the ship’s hold, compliant extractions that could

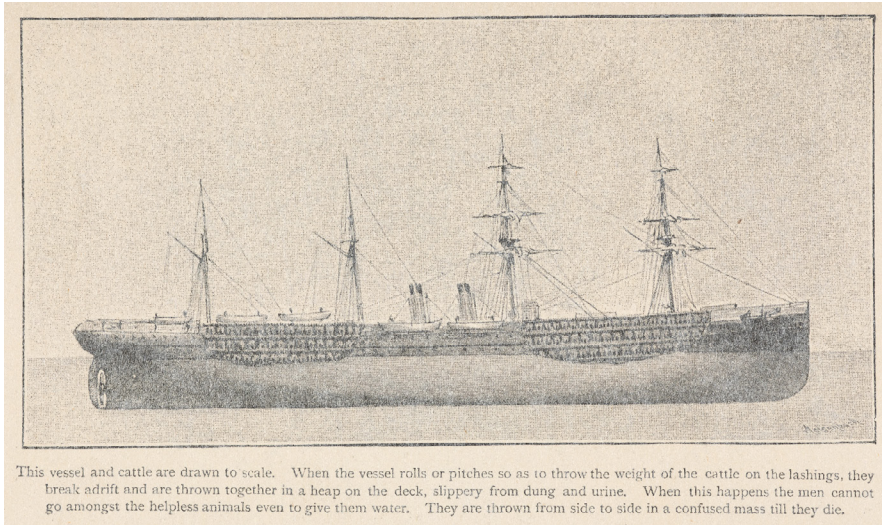


Figure 3 Unknown artist (signature indecipherable), untitled, c. 1890. Half-tone printed etching on paper, 15.1 x 7.6cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8807.c.38. Photo: The British Library.

not move nor cause the ‘pandemonium’ he reported from crew members.⁴⁸ Testimony described the hot and acrid conditions in which the cows were stowed and the panic, blood and excrement that filled the spaces between decks. For example, in the cutaway’s caption, Plimsoll claimed the cattle were ‘thrown together in a heap on the deck, slippery from dung and urine [...] They are thrown from side to side in a confused mass till they die’.

Marcus Wood has argued that the ‘awful rigour’ of visual representations of slave ships contradicted their accompanying texts and the material reality they referenced.⁴⁹ Wood refers to the still and orderly bodies shown in the engraved broadside *Description of a Slave Ship*, whose inertia belie the chaos that unfolds in textual descriptions of effluvia and physical harm (figure 4). The *Description*, which was printed in many editions at the turn of the eighteenth century, is one variation of several designs distributed by abolitionist groups in Britain and the USA which show the slave ship *Brookes* in elevation, planimetric and cross-section views on one sheet. The first iteration of this schematic is attributed to the Plymouth chapter of the Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade, which Cheryl Finley refers to as a ‘plan,

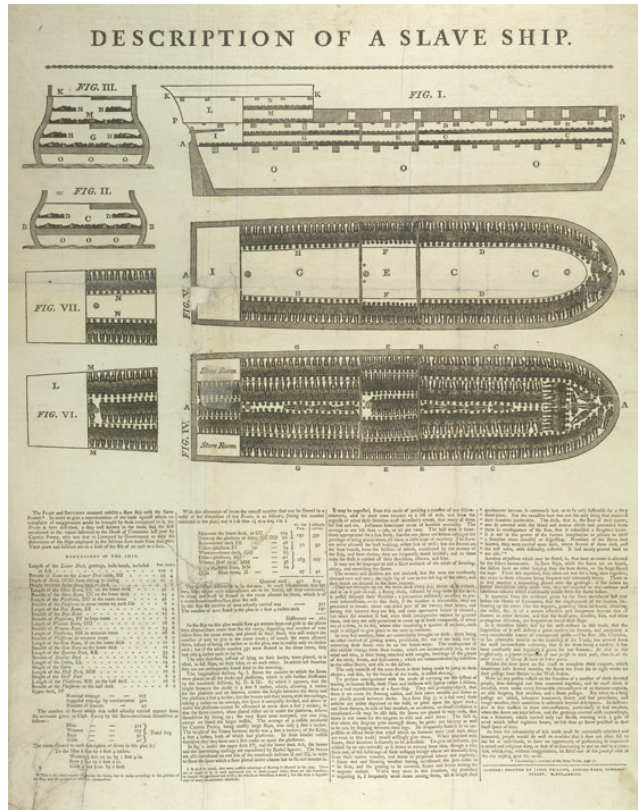


Figure 4 Unknown artist, *Description of a Slave Ship*, c. 1801. Woodcut on paper, 60.2 x 48 cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 1881.d.8 (46). Photo: The British Library.

not a realistic representation’, which requires viewers actively imagine the spaces depicted.⁵⁰

Furthermore, Finley argues that the binary nature of the woodcut process, which places black ink on white paper, has implications not only for how race is represented, but also calls attention to the contiguity of void and populated spaces. The binary nature of print comes to the fore in one image from the Humanitarian League’s pamphlet which portrays animals as abstract material. In *Plan I*, ‘Atlantic cattle ship – plan of the main deck’, rectangular blocks of varying shade replace bovine bodies (figure 5). Solid black connotes areas for cattle whereas diagonal hatching designates hatchways, the sites of entry

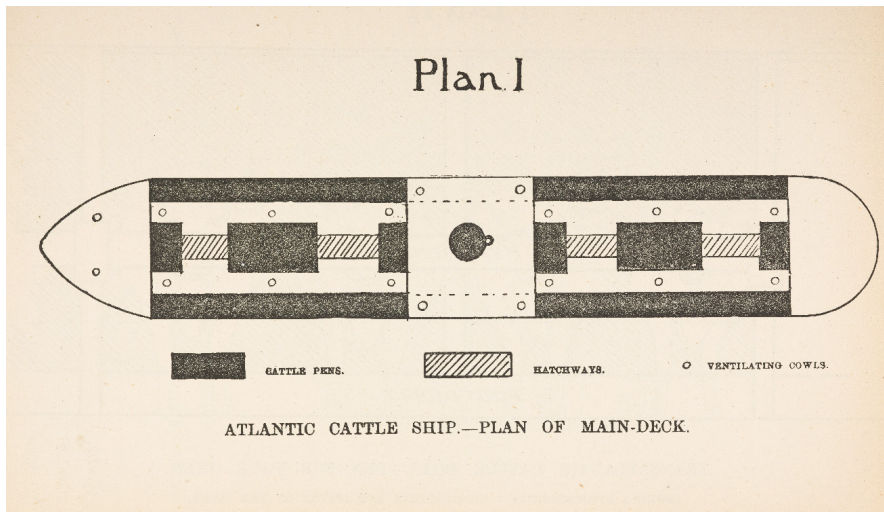


Figure 5 Unknown artist, *Plan I: Atlantic cattle ship. – Plan of the main-deck*. Woodcut on paper, 11.7 x 17.5cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8425.aa.73/15. Photo: The British Library.

and exit; small circles show the method of ventilating lower decks and makes oblique reference to breathing bodies stowed below. Concentrated areas of black that skirt the cattle ship deck's outer edges and intersperse the midline are reminiscent of the incessant, though individuated, band of human bodies that populate the deck perimeter of 'Figure V' in the *Description* (figure 4, centre right, planimetric view).⁵¹ The areas designated for cattle were calculated, cordoned and concentrated into an idealised strip of value, in which bodies reduce to inky homogeneity. This raises the question of what is made visible in the print, for the uncategorised spaces between the pens, presumably for humans to traverse, are unpigmented, just as none of the crew are shown in the *Description*. That is not to say that the shared visual logic demonstrates a case of imitation but, rather, foregrounds the intersection of ink and capital. Those rendered in ink are simultaneously rendered as raw material.

The visual logic of these prints is comparable also in the way that they present a ship's architecture from several coexisting viewpoints - external and internal - through which viewers can experience varying degrees of proximity to the live subjects depicted. Wood speculates on why the *Description* endures in visual culture where 'fine art' depictions of the middle passage do not: 'One

reason must be that it was the only eighteenth-century representation of the middle passage that took one not only on board, but inside the hold of, a slave ship'.⁵² The nineteenth-century pamphlets also imaginatively entered the hold of cattle ships and, in doing so, reduced the relational distance between viewers and cows. Crucial to these encounters was the tendency to make the 'eye-image' of other animals prominent in their printed matter. Jed Mayer has written of 'the speaking looks of Victorian animals' which came to the fore in images depicting humans' abusive behaviour towards other animals.⁵³ 'View of the cattle penned together' is the one image in Plimsoll's text that explicitly exemplified human mistreatment of nonhumans aboard (figure 6).

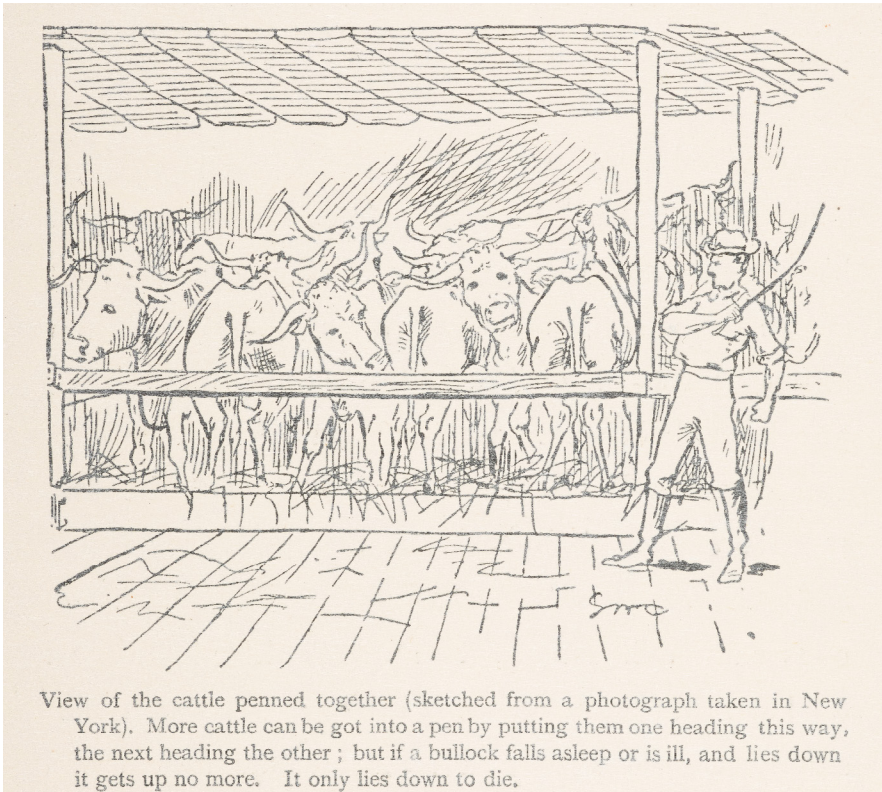


Figure 6 Unknown artist (signature indecipherable), *View of the cattle penned together*, c. 1890. Half-tone printed etching on paper, 9.2. x 7.4cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8807.c.38. Photo: The British Library.

Plimsoll's corresponding description is detached from the image, appearing only six pages later. None of the pamphlet's other images depict deliberate violence, and Plimsoll here shifts the rhetorical register immediately towards eliciting sympathy. As with several other illustrations in *Cattle Ships*, it has also apparently passed through a translation from photograph to sketch. The binary nature of this representation emphasises the bullocks' eyes, which stand out as concentrated pools of ink like Hawkins' ideal expressive bovine subject. Each figure is individuated and those facing us look in different directions about the frame, noticing subjective details of their environment. One cow pointedly levels their gaze outwards with an almost quizzical expression across their face, head tilted in an appeal to viewers as the drover violently raises his goad.

The Humanitarian League employed a similar tactic in its pamphlet in which densely pigmented eyeballs punctuate *Plan II*, a depiction of a 'pen for four oxen' (figure 7). The cows are shown confined behind a wooden plank, the final barrier between viewer and subject, which their eyes peek over. Their pen is less crowded than Plimsoll's choice depiction and free of extraneous details, such as hay littering the floor. Instead, the small printed image blurs the line between sentimental portraiture and schematic diagram. Each element of the ship's architecture is reduced to a two-dimensional plane; even the transparency of the footboard that provides imaginative access to otherwise invisible details underlines *Plan II*'s diagrammatic components. The image's extended caption creates a specific location for the viewer, as we are informed that the view is 'looking athwartships', meaning from one side to another in its longitudinal orientation. At this point, viewers are required to do what Finley refers to as 'imaginative work' to correlate between *Plans II* and *III*.⁵⁴ *Plan III* is a section which depicts individual cows through their outline alone (figure 7). The cows differ slightly in stature standing squarely in their pens compressed between vertical lines and small rectangular shapes that protrude from the walls towards their faces. Their hollow bodies and vacant environment contrast with the striated area below filled with other - presumably inanimate - cargo and consequently stand out as an inefficient use of storage space. Reading the two adjacent plans together, viewers can see that the spot where the cows' faces are levelled with rectangular planks in *Plan III* corresponds with the labelled headboard of the preceding image. Viewers are consequently placed not only inside the hull of the cattle ship but

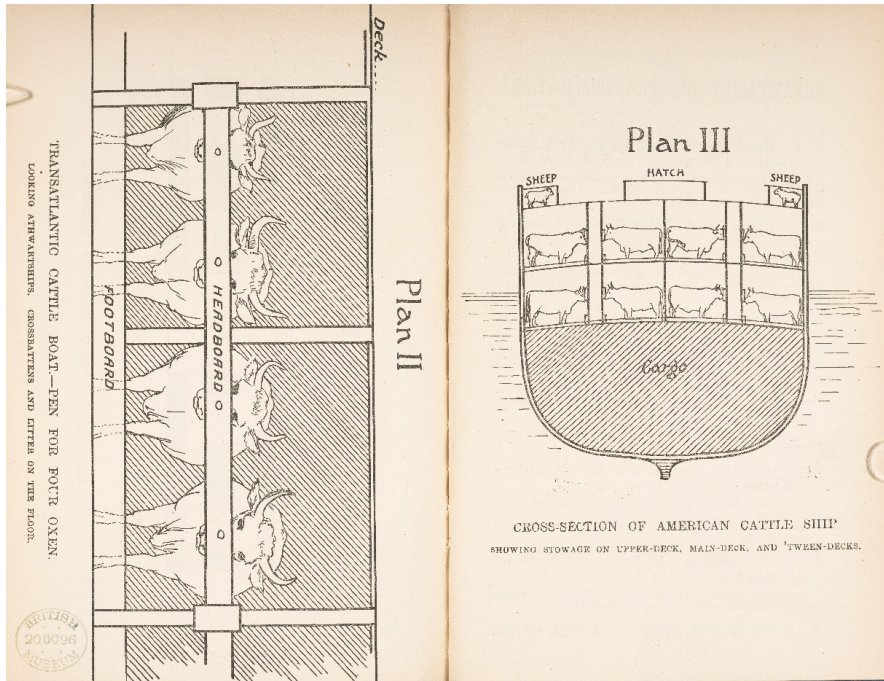


Figure 7 Unknown artist, *Plan II: Transatlantic cattle boat. – Pen for four oxen.* and *Plan III: Cross-section of American Cattle Ship.* Woodcut on paper, 23.1 x 17.5cm. In the collection of the British Library, London. © The British Library Board. Shelfmark: 8425.aa.73/15. Photo: The British Library.

also actually in the position of one of the cows or their human tenders. The image reduces relational distance between viewers and the bovine subjects in an elicitation of empathy and seeks a recognition that these cows' being-aliveness is conspicuous: too neat, restricted and monotonous to constitute life.

Conclusion

Regardless of a shared aim to prevent other animals' suffering, neither of the pamphlets discussed in this article question the inevitability of the cows' deaths. Both texts – even that of the Humanitarian League which was, more broadly, a vegetarian organisation – are predicated on the suggestion to invest more in shipboard refrigeration on welfare grounds. Without artificial cold, it was not only the ethical standing of British meat consumption that was at

stake, but the nation's capacity to provide for itself and make each citizen stronger through Britain's exploitation of international food supplies.

As I have shown, analysis of media conversions between print techniques shows how Plimsoll and the Humanitarian League employed advocacy imagery in their publications. Both developed similar expectations of humane treatment through their pictorial components, yet their visual strategies differed. While Plimsoll's material was focused on specific instances of misconduct to use as evidence, the Humanitarian League's use of print went further to imaginatively present the structural boundaries that formed the lives of these cattle ship cows. Visibility becomes a key concern in assessing the welfare claims of these images, especially who is shown and where their body is recorded within surrounding architecture. Throughout, cows' bodies are constituted in these images more through built surroundings than biological form and the shifts between abstraction and figuration variously fragment bovine bodies into figures part product, part person.

At stake in these images was the uncontrollable animality of the confined bovine figures on board: their panic, defecation, wounds and bodily depletion that threads through the text without visually manifesting. Imports of foreign meat grew steadily in the latter half of the century, leading to a greater need to control nonhuman cargo while preserving the valuable vitality they embodied. As these paternalistic representations suggested, bovine bodies needed saving from inhumane abuse, yet not from human mouths which could be fed in a more economically efficient and morally righteous way. Moral, economic and physical shortfalls inherent to the livestock trade were, it was to be understood, rectifiable with actual mechanised stalling of nonhuman bodies by artificial cold, not just images alone.

Notes

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- 1 Samuel Plimsoll, *Cattle Ships, being the fifth chapter of Mr. Plimsoll's second appeal for our seamen*, London, 1890; Anonymous, 'Agricultural Notes', *The Dundee Courier & Argus* (Dundee, Scotland), Monday, January 26, 1891, n.p.
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