



# At Home and Astray: The Domestic Dog in Victorian Britain

*Philip Howell*

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Although the British consider themselves a nation of dog lovers, what we have come to know as the modern dog came into existence only after a profound, and relatively recent, transformation in that country's social attitudes and practices. In *At Home and Astray*, Philip Howell focuses on Victorian Britain, and especially London, to show how the dog's changing place in society was the subject of intense debate and depended on a fascinating combination of forces even to come about.

Despite a relationship with humans going back thousands of years, the dog only became fully domesticated and installed at the heart of the middle-class home in the nineteenth century. Dog breeding and showing proliferated at that time, and dog ownership increased considerably. At the same time, the dog was increasingly policed out of public space, the "stray" becoming the unloved counterpart of the household "pet." Howell shows how this redefinition of the dog's place illuminates our understanding of modernity and the city. He also explores the fascinating process whereby the dog's changing role was proposed, challenged, and confronted—and in the end conditionally accepted. With a supporting cast that includes Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Thomas Carlyle, and Charles Darwin, and subjects of inquiry ranging from vivisection and the policing of rabies to pet cemeteries, dog shelters, and the practice of walking the dog, *At Home and Astray* is a contribution not only to the history of animals but also to our understanding of the Victorian era and its legacies.

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