



Trinity College Dublin
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath
The University of Dublin

TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN
INAUGURAL LECTURE

FABULOUS HISTORIES
ANIMALS IN LITERATURE

Professor **Aileen Douglas**

B.A., M.A. (DUBL., DELAWARE), Ph.D. (PRIN.), F.T.C.D. (2000)

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About me

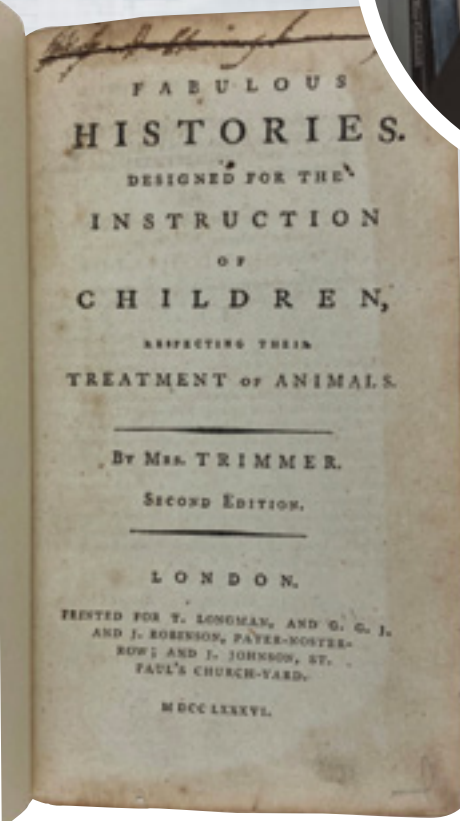
Aileen Douglas is Professor of Eighteenth-Century Studies at Trinity College Dublin. Having studied English and History as an undergraduate at Trinity she undertook postgraduate work in the United States. Her M.A. was awarded by the University of Delaware and her PhD by Princeton University. She taught at Washington University in St. Louis for several years before returning to the School of English at Trinity in 1993. A Fellow of TCD since 2000, she has served as Dean of Undergraduate Studies/Senior Lecturer (2008-11) and Head of the School of English (2016-2019). Aileen was President of the Eighteenth-Century Ireland Society (2017-2022) and has given invited lectures in the United States, the U.K., France, Italy and Japan, among others.



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Abstract

This lecture draws attention to the prominence of animals in eighteenth-century writing. It is particularly interested in how writers across the eighteenth century developed innovative literary forms to represent non-human creatures, and to explore related moral and epistemological issues.

In the context of global exploration, and colonization, Europeans were exposed to a dazzling range of previously unknown life-forms, and the friable boundary between humans and other creatures became a fruitful, and sometimes vexed, area of representation in the early novel. At home, as pet-keeping became notably fashionable, and an object of moral scrutiny, animal biographies and autobiographies made it possible to think of an animal's point of view.

New forms of didactic literature instructed children through delight, using story and talking animals to discourage cruelty and promote empathy.

Meanwhile, the extent to which creatures from other species can ever be truly recognized and known by human beings was a significant subject in poetry. Works discussed in the lecture include Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*; Francis Coventry's *The History of Pompey the Little: or the Life and Adventures of a Lap-Dog*, Sarah Trimmer's *Fabulous Histories*, Maria Edgeworth's *Early Lessons*; and William Blake's *Songs of Innocence and Experience*.

Fabulous Histories: Animals in Literature





School of English

The School of English at Trinity is one of the oldest in Great Britain or Ireland. It is ranked 7th in Europe in QS World University Subject Rankings 2022, and 25th in the world. Today, the School comprises a total of approximately five hundred undergraduates, over one hundred visiting students, and about ninety students who are reading for a higher degree. There are over thirty permanent members of staff whose research and teaching expertise encompasses a wide range of areas and topics. The School's achievements include its long-held international reputation for influential research and publication, the intense demand for its English courses from highly qualified undergraduates and postgraduates, and the internationally-recognized high quality of its graduates. Its distinctive commitment to small group teaching, combined with our innovative course design, gives the School an enviable international profile.

Members of the teaching staff publish regularly in all areas of current teaching and research activity and there are currently strengths in eighteenth-, nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature, as well as contemporary writing, popular literature, children's literature, horror and the Gothic, American and postcolonial literature. Irish writing in English from 1590 to the present is an area of particular strength. Members of the School who are also active as distinguished creative writers include Eiléan Ní Chuilleanáin, Gerald Dawe, Deirdre Madden, Harry Clifton, Carlo Gébler, Kevin Power, and Seán Hewitt.

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