Black Beauty

Black Beauty:
His Grooms and Companions.
The Autobiography of a Horse
by Anna Sewell

Edited by

Kristen Guest

CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS
PUBLISHING

Black Beauty: *His Grooms and Companions.*
The Autobiography of a Horse
by Anna Sewell,
Edited by Kristen Guest

This book first published 2011

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-3382-7, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-3382-0

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Continuously in print and translated into multiple languages since it was first published in 1877, Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* is a classic work of children's literature that cultivates empathy for those who cannot speak for themselves. If we now regard it largely as a text for children, however, *Black Beauty* was originally produced for a specific adult readership. Writing to "induce kindness, sympathy and an understanding treatment of horses" among their routine handlers,[1] Sewell also critiqued the contemporary fashion for using bearing reins and harsh bits on harness horses. This aspect of the book was central for its earliest advocates, including Edward Fordham Flower, a brewer and anti-cruelty activist well-known in Victorian England for his opposition to the bearing rein, and George Angell, an American who acquired and distributed copies of *Black Beauty* as part of his work for the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.[2] Though she died shortly after it was published, Sewell's book contributed significantly to late nineteenth-century campaigns against the bearing rein and remains a seminal anti-cruelty text today. What is most remarkable about *Black Beauty*, however, is neither its appeal as a children's story nor its effectiveness as a didactic text, though it is unquestionably powerful on both counts. Rather, *Black Beauty* is a text that, while apparently simple in message and mode of delivery, suggests the diverse ways that lives and values were being reshaped by complex economic and social forces in the Victorian era.

Anna Sewell's life began March 30, 1820 in Yarmouth, England.[3] Her parents, Isaac and Mary, were Quakers whose lives registered the profound changes being wrought on traditional agrarian modes of life through the nineteenth century. Mary's early experience in a farming family was idyllic in many respects. Though never wealthy, the family maintained both a generational connection to local labourers and sense of tightly-knit communal values that engendered a sense of stability and connection to the past. For Mary's family, as for many others, this way of life was disrupted by rapid advances in technology, industrialism and the growth of alienated labour through the early years of the century. In 1809, when Mary was twelve, the country experienced an agricultural depression and her father gave up the farm to enter the shipping business. When this endeavour foundered in 1817, Mary and her sisters found work as teachers

and governesses to help contribute to the household. In 1819 she married businessman Isaac Sewell, and the couple relocated to London where he established a small shop. Anna was born the following year, followed by a brother, Philip, in 1822. Also in 1822, Sewell's business failed and the family relocated, establishing the pattern of economic instability and geographic displacement that continued through much of Anna's life. A sense of grounding came not through a sustained connection to place, therefore, but rather as a result of the values and emotional support provided by her mother. Like many middle-class Victorian women, Mary Sewell placed great emphasis on spiritual and moral matters. At home, Anna and Philip were raised to embrace an ethos of self-discipline and to eschew worldly pleasures. In the community, Mary was a tireless philanthropist who focused on such causes as abolitionism, temperance, and education for the working classes, all themes that ultimately became central to Anna's focus in *Black Beauty*.

Unable to afford significant formal education for her daughter, Mary undertook some of this labour herself based on the system expounded by Richard and Maria Edgeworth in *Practical Education* (1798). Mary also began to write and her earliest book, *Walks With Mama*, was a reader comprised of one-syllable words published anonymously in 1824. Later in life she became a successful author, producing a number of works of moral education in prose and verse that found audiences among children and the working classes. Though she and Anna left the Quaker church in 1835 and were subsequently baptized by the Church of England, Mary's emphasis on the spiritual values of hard work, moral character and self-discipline influenced Anna's world view. In *Black Beauty* we thus find a character who perseveres, much like a Christian hero, despite significant trials. Anna's sympathy for animals was also shaped by her mother, whose interest in natural science was coloured by her belief in the divinity of all living things. From an early age the Sewell children were taught to be kind to animals, and in later life when Anna witnessed animal cruelty it "roused her indignation almost to fury."[4]

The process of writing *Black Beauty* unfolded over a significant period of time. Anna, an invalid spinster, lived with her parents until her death at fifty seven. At fourteen, she suffered an injury to her ankle that limited her ability to move and throughout her life she experienced recurrent bouts of illness. Sewell's biographers suggest that her physical limitations contributed to Anna's interest in horses, since riding and driving provided a sense of freedom and mobility for much of her life.[5] Before being confined permanently to her home in 1871, Anna worked with her mother, helping to establish a Working Man's Club, as well as assisting in

temperance work and other charitable endeavours. Following her retirement from this aspect of public life Anna began writing *Black Beauty*, her only novel. In November 1871 she recorded in her diary, "I am writing the life of a horse and getting dolls and boxes ready for Christmas."[6] Work proceeded slowly, however. Anna was impeded by ill-health and at various points it seems that she dictated work to Mary, "writing or reading being equally impossible to her."[7] By 1876 she was still not finished, though her journal notes that she was continuing to make progress. In the winter of 1877, Sewell's health improved somewhat and she was finally able to complete her novel. It was sent to Mary's publisher, Jarrold and Sons, and was published in November 1877. Sewell passed away shortly thereafter, in April 1878, without living to see its exceptional success. In England, the book went through more than thirty-five editions in a decade, while in America, where it was marketed as "The *Uncle Tom's Cabin* of the Horse," more than one million copies were circulated by 1891.[8] Copies were distributed widely to drivers and cabmen, as well as to schools, where *Black Beauty* began its career as a children's book.

As a didactic text, *Black Beauty* speaks directly to the working-class men who were primarily responsible for the care of horses during the Victorian era—the grooms, stablemen, ostlers, cabbies, deliverymen and coachmen, as well as the boys whose working lives would ultimately involve horses. With this group in mind, Sewell focuses on practical issues of animal husbandry as well as on broader questions of working-class character. In many respects a primer of sound equine management, *Black Beauty* makes a case for proper stable management and outlines humane practices for breaking colts to ride and drive. Beyond this, she also offers an object lesson to boys who ride and drive their ponies roughly as well as to adults more concerned with fashion than the well-being of their animal charges. In taking up matters of human character, moreover, Sewell also addresses issues connected with the moral improvement of the working classes. Thus, for example, the death of Reuben Smith frames a direct moral about the perils of drink, while the punishment of Filcher offers a warning about dishonesty.

If Sewell deals directly with questions of animal husbandry and working-class moral education, however, she also addresses larger questions about character central to dominant conceptions of Victorian social identity. This aspect of the text identifies kindness and moral responsibility to others as central components of masculinity, in effect positioning middle-class norms as a model for society as a whole. In emphasizing the need for Christian values among those who hold power over others, moreover, Sewell offered a prospective antidote to the effects of

contemporary public life, in which economic individualism predominated. One effect of this focus is that although she acknowledges the special moral wisdom of women, children, and animals throughout the text, Sewell does not challenge the patriarchal structure of Victorian society; rather, she emphasizes the need for men to temper worldly concerns with Christian kindness. Throughout the text, set-piece lectures on the need for sympathetic treatment of others are delivered by the idealized gentlemen who appear as role models. Like her contemporary Cardinal Newman, whose famous description of the gentleman emphasized the imperative to consider the feelings of others, particularly the weak and vulnerable, Sewell dwells on the responsibilities that accompany masculine entitlement to govern.[9] If Squire Gordon and the "true gentleman" who step forward to defend horses against cruelty are clearly members of the privileged social class implicitly referenced in Victorian definitions of the gentleman, however, Sewell also includes working-class examples of gentlemanly ethos. Thus, for example, John Manly, Joe Green and Jerry Barker become spokesmen for enlightened principles of kindness and Christian charity, and in doing so take their place as gentlemen of character if not of means. Also connected with the humane ideal of the Christian gentleman is Black Beauty himself, who embraces the values of hard work, earnest effort, and fair play central to contemporary conceptions of normative masculinity.

Beyond his connection with Sewell's representation of masculine identity, Black Beauty has been read as a figure expressive of the ideological struggles of a range of disempowered groups including slaves, servants, and women, among others. The parallel between Beauty's position in Victorian society and that of slaves in America was recognized early in the book's career, and has subsequently been elaborated by such critics as Peter Stoneley and Moira Ferguson.[10] For Ruth Padel, the narrative of Ginger's breaking-in is a metaphoric rape scene that recalls conventions of eighteenth-century pornographic literature, while as an allegory of fashion and gender, Gina Dorré points out, the novel suggests a relationship between harness and corset that offers a critique of normative Victorian femininity.[11] Taken together, these diverse critical readings suggest how the novel's focus on sympathetic identification and use of an animal hero allows it to express a diverse range of messages beyond the author's original design. Though Sewell's intended message may have focused on a specific readership, then, the novel's appeal has always exceeded this mark, cutting across boundaries of age and gender, time and place.

What ultimately connects readings that identify the hero's position with such a wide range of diverse—and even conflicting—experiences is Sewell's appeal to a sentimental world view. Though he experiences significant trials over the course of his life, Beauty remains a quintessential sentimental hero, bearing his suffering and maintaining a sense of good will towards his human owners, to whom he is unfalteringly obedient and kind. When he is finally restored to an idyllic rural environment at the end of the novel, Sewell seems to identify Beauty's good fortune as a reward for his good behaviour even as she affirms the potential for kindness in a world that seems hostile to feeling. In doing so, she makes a connection that Philip Davis has identified between the Victorian penchant for sentimentality and the pressures of modernization. "When people moved from the countryside to the towns and hardly knew where they were any more in that harsher and faster world," he suggests, "at least they still knew the communal heart was in the right place."[12] In *Black Beauty*, Sewell uses the language of sentiment to distinguish the logic of what is "right" from the emphasis of human social hierarchy on economic systems. Beauty's suffering thus places him as a model figure, the "hero of good and noble heart" that Fred Kaplan identifies as central to the sentimental mode.[13] If Beauty loses his connection to place when he leaves Birtwick Park and the countryside of his youth, then, his belief in the values associated with that place remain, and this belief is rewarded when he is returned to a lost Eden.

If it seems to offer sentimental reassurance about the enduring power of good feeling and the rewards of good behaviour, however, *Black Beauty* is a complex text that does not ultimately provide easy answers to the ills of modernity. As with Anna herself, Black Beauty experiences the effects of massive change associated with the advent of technology, industrialization, and an emergent global economy. Though Beauty's life at Birtwick Park affirms the values associated with idealizations of traditional agrarian hierarchy—it is a place where human and animal servants are treated kindly and valued as individuals—this mode of life proves to be fragile, and is recursively disrupted by exigencies of ill health and economic hardship. After Mrs. Gordon becomes ill and the family must go abroad, Beauty is purchased and sold a number of times, with each change of situation tending downward. The narrative shift from a rural to an urban setting that frames this trajectory emphasizes the increasing sense of alienation evident in Victorian social relationships. When he complains about being treated like a steam engine by his cockney drivers, for instance, Beauty voices the experience of objectification in a labour market, an effect shared by animals and human beings across a

range of classes. If it draws our attention to the evils of economic individualism, moreover, this progression also suggests the extent to which the discourse of sentiment exists in tension with capitalist ideology in Sewell's text. Early in the novel Duchess, Black Beauty's mother, offers words of wisdom that suggest the fragility of the individual's position in a world governed by economic considerations. Beauty relates, "She told me the better I behaved, the better I should be treated, and that it was always wisest to do my best to please my master." To this, however, she adds a significant caveat: "I hope you will fall into good hands; but a horse never knows who may buy him, or who may drive him; it is all chance for us, but I still say, do your best whatever it is, and keep up your good name." Though addressed specifically to the plight of the horse as an economic object, Duchess's description also suggests the extent to which human agency was determined and limited by economic chance throughout the Victorian era. Indeed, the prospect of financial ruin—through loss of employment due to shifting economic conditions, losses in the markets, or the collapse of banks—haunted Victorians across the social classes. This early passage thus intimates that despite the novel's subsequent affirmation of feeling as a fixed index of right and wrong, our experience is ultimately structured and determined by fluctuating economic conditions indifferent to considerations of good character.

The concern with chance evident in the novel might be dismissed as a matter of sentimental plotting intended to provoke an affective response. It is chance, after all, that delivers Black Beauty from certain death on the streets of London and leaves him happily situated in the novel's closing pages, just as it is chance that provides a benefactress for Jerry when illness threatens his ability to provide for his family. In context, however, the novel's representation of chance cuts deeper into core aspects of human and animal experience in the Victorian era. Though Beauty's mother advises that he keep up his good name, his cumulative experience suggests that a world governed by concern with economic utility offers no real place for recognition of one's moral fibre. Despite his repeated willingness to protect his masters at great personal cost, Beauty remains an economic object to be disposed of when he is no longer of use. Praised for saving the life of Lady Anne, Beauty is nonetheless liquidated from the Earl's stables after Rueben Smith breaks his knees and he is permanently blemished. Though the Earl acknowledges feeling bad about ruining horses acquired from a friend "who thought they would have a good home with me," he concludes in favour of fashion: "I could not have knees like those in my stables." This pattern continues throughout the text, and when a starved and beaten Beauty collapses in the streets of London it is not

sympathy that saves him from the knacker, but rather his owner's susceptibility to the economic argument that with rest and feed "you may get more than his skin is worth." Even the aptly named Farmer Thoroughgood, who purchases Beauty at the urging of his grandson, does so with an eye to resale. When Beauty closes his story by assuring us that his newest owners "have promised that I shall never be sold, and so I have nothing to fear," sentiment makes us hope for his continued happiness but experience reminds us of the fragility of such promises.

For Beauty, then, the tension between feeling and economic exigency cannot ultimately be resolved in the novel's sentimental ending. This conflict becomes even more central in the novel's other subplots, particularly when Sewell shifts her attention from studies of good character to questions about the role of environment in shaping "bad." The most noteworthy counterpoint to Black Beauty in the novel is Ginger, his stablemate and friend at Birtwick Park. Though Ginger's bad temper initially contrasts with Beauty's positive attitude towards others, her suspicion of humans seems justified when we learn how she has been treated by men. Unlike Beauty, who receives an exemplary education from Farmer Gray and thus has no cause to fear people, Ginger is tortured during her early training. As a result, she has little tolerance for ill-treatment and expresses decidedly political views about the subjection of animals to the whims of man—though her manner improves significantly when she is treated consistently and considerately. If Beauty's experience seems to validate sentimental ideas about the value of stoic suffering and the power of good character, then, Ginger complicates and unsettles this focus on individual agency by introducing questions about the ways character may be shaped by chance. Over the course of the novel, moreover, it becomes evident that possession of a good or bad attitude does not ultimately shape a horse's destiny. Though their training and manner are different, both Beauty and Ginger descend to the lowest ranks of the equine order, and both experience a level of suffering that lead them to wish for death. Though Beauty is ultimately saved it is important to remember that this, too, is a matter of chance, while Ginger's death offers a more realistic account of the fate experienced by most working horses in the Victorian era.

Ginger's role in highlighting the negative effects of a system governed by economic concerns is further extended in the story of Seedy Sam. Just as Ginger and Beauty offer a counterpoint between good behaviour and bad, Sam and Jerry seem to be opposites. Jerry is a model cabman and one of the text's most notable "true gentlemen." Always kind to his horses and solicitous of their comfort, he refuses to work on Sunday, treats others the

way he would be treated, and extols the values of temperance. By contrast, Seedy Sam is berated by the other cabmen for his shabby appearance and treatment of his horse. Rather than take up the matter as a question of individual failing, however, Sam responds by pointing out how a capitalist system practically excludes opportunities for kindness. Unlike Jerry, who owns his cab and horses, Sam must pay for the use of horse and cab at high rates; as a result, he points out, "if the horses don't work we must starve, and I and my children have known what that is before now." He continues, "tis a mockery to tell a man he must not overwork his horse, for when a beast is downright tired, there's nothing but the whip that will keep his legs agoing—you can't help yourself—you must put your wife and children before the horse." Sam's story frames a brief, if powerful, social critique that directs our attention to the limits of the text's moral vision as a panacea for the ills of modernity. As the chief cabman concedes, "You've beaten me Sam, for it's all true." His subsequent suggestion, "you might tell the poor beast that you were sorry to take it out of him that way," rings hollow in context insofar as it suggests the limited power of words to challenge or change overarching economic structures. Tellingly, Ginger and Seedy Sam die within pages of each other, and both characters offer a glimpse of the complex roles economic and social environments play in determining one's circumstance.

If Sewell's appeal to the discourse of sentiment is undercut by her emphasis on the overarching power of economics to determine individual circumstance, it is also unsettled by the novel's anthropomorphic depiction of an animal hero. Beauty's story is framed explicitly as autobiography, a genre that represents his experience via a human model of psychological development. Associated with codifying normative values in the Victorian era, autobiography also sentimentally suggested the power of individual agency and proper feeling to triumph over circumstance. It was thus used not only to represent the life histories of privileged subjects, but also appropriated and strategically deployed to suggest a connection between disempowered subjects and members of more privileged groups.[15] As with slave and working-class autobiographical narratives, Tess Cosslett points out, Beauty's story is framed in ways that make a case for his similarity to the people he serves. Though not the first work of animal autobiography, she adds, *Black Beauty* is a novel that "allows the reader to slide in and out of horse-consciousness, blurring the human/animal divide."[16] In humanizing Beauty, Sewell ensures that readers can relate to and sympathize with his feelings: his suffering is poignant for us because he identifiably feels as we do. Because his values replicate and endorse those of dominant society, moreover, Beauty's suffering does not prompt

rebellion against existing norms, but rather affirms the need for kindness within an existing social framework.

In framing this approach to animal subjectivity, Sewell both invokes and revises themes central to Victorian science and ethics that were very much in the air by the time *Black Beauty* was published.[17] For anti-vivisection activists such as Frances Power Cobbe, for example, animals' capacities for feeling were central to arguments against mistreatment. When humans violate animals, she argued, they engage in acts of moral atrocity at odds with Christian values. Cobbe thus differentiates man's wants—which animals must serve—from mere "wantonness." "If from the odious delight in witnessing suffering, or from furious tempers, or parsimony, or idle curiosity, we put an animal to needless torture," she asserts, "we stand condemned; we have offended against the law requiring us to refrain from inflicting pain on any being which, by its sentient nature, is sensible to pain." As a fiction of animal experience, *Black Beauty* takes up a position analogous to the one outlined by Cobbe, suggesting that while it is the duty of animals to serve man, human beings must be governed by the Christian duty of kindness. Although he tells us of his preference for liberty, then, Beauty concedes of his labour "I am not complaining, for I know it must be so." What is often missing, Sewell makes clear over the course of the novel, is the human obligation to govern responsibly. Other contemporary views of the relationship between man and animal took up similar perspectives, though often with less stringent views about the need for man to temper mastery with kindness. Philip Hamerton, for example, takes the horse's duty to serve man as a matter of divine sanction. Though he acknowledges the value of kind treatment, then, Hamerton concludes "I have no hesitation in making the horse do his duty, by gentle means, if possible,—by harsher means, if necessary."

Such views were both supported and complicated by the later scientific work of Charles Darwin, who by the 1870s had begun to explore openly the interconnections between man and animals suggested only obliquely in *The Origin of Species* (1859). Breaking definitively with religious and philosophical models that differentiated man from other species on the basis of their possessing neither souls nor emotional capabilities, *The Descent of Man* (1871) and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) highlight the evolutionary trajectories that connect diverse species. Where animals were traditionally regarded as biological machines distinct from humans,[18] Darwin's work postulates that "there is no fundamental difference between man and the higher mammals in their mental faculties."[19] This argument suggested a biological basis for

emotional continuities between people and animals, even as it articulated a new way of viewing the interrelationship between all living beings. If Darwin offered scientific support for animal activists' arguments about shared structures of feeling, however, his theories also set aside both the traditional religious belief that human beings command other species by divine right and the appeals to sentiment central to anti-cruelty discourse. Though Darwin did not challenge the idea of man's pre-eminence, as Harriet Ritvo points out,[20] his descriptive metaphors invoked and reinforced notions of economic individualism popular in Victorian England. Certainly, Darwin's concept of evolution as a matter of chance rather than part of a divine plan lent indirect support to contemporary economic individualists who advocated self-interest over altruism.

For Sewell, who was not only emphatically religious but also passionately opposed to the effects of economic individualism, the maxim that everyone "take care of number one" is a central focus of critique in *Black Beauty*. To raise the issue via the discourse of sentiment sets aside the public authority of sciences such as economics or biology, and prompts us—as Nicola Brown suggests—"to feel and act rightly as human beings and moral actors."[21] *Black Beauty* represents the complexities of a world caught between sentiment and economics, in effect challenging the fundamental distinction between private feeling and public conduct these categories imply. If it unsettles the fundamental distinctions between public and private spheres that anchored Victorian ideas about identity, however, it also affirms the human capacity to act in a principled way towards others. Indeed, though individual agency is often overwritten by the social structures in which the characters are embedded, Sewell's text ultimately insists that our choices matter.

Though horses are no longer central to the economic function of contemporary society, such knowledge of choice continues to resonate as we contemplate the mistreatment of animals used for recreation, such as race and show horses, of animals used in scientific research, and of animals produced as part of industrialized agri-business. Indeed, our current cultural responses to issues of animal cruelty often veer between the sentimental and economic perspectives articulated in *Black Beauty*. Like the Victorians, we have a tendency to focus either on the sentimentalized, exceptional individual, or to treat all members of a class as an economic aggregate—with the end result that overarching structures that support cruelty remain entrenched. As a novel with a specific purpose, *Black Beauty* had a tangible impact on abuses of the bearing rein. Yet, one could also argue that Sewell's conservative commitments to an existing hierarchy foreclose on her text's more radical implications for systemic

change. If we set aside binary assessments of the novel as either politically radical or conservative, however, we open ourselves to its real richness as a work that raises but does not resolve tensions between utility and feeling, self and other, the powerful and the powerless.

Notes

[1] Quoted in Bayley, *The Life and Letters of Mary Sewell* (London: Nisbet, 1889), 272.
[2] See Adrienne E. Gavin, *Dark Horse: A Life of Anna Sewell* (Stroud: Sutton, 2004), 193-4, 188-91.
[3] The biographical information included here is indebted to biographies of Sewell produced by Adrienne E. Gavin and Susan Chitty; see *Dark Horse* and *The Woman who Wrote Black Beauty: A Life of Anna Sewell* (London: Hodder and Stroughton, 1971).
[4] Margaret Sewell quoted in Lopa Prusty, "Anna Sewell," *Dictionary of Literary Biography*, Volume 163 *British Children's Writers, 1800-1880* (Detroit: Gale, 1996), 259-66, 260.
[5] Chitty, 109, and Gavin, chapter 8.
[6] Chitty, 164.
[7] Mary Sewell, quoted in Bayley, 278.
[8] Gavin, 187, 191.
[9] Cardinal Newman notes, "It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain." *The Idea of a University* (Washington, DC: Regnery, 1999), 189.
[10] Peter Stoneley, "Sentimental Emasculations: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Black Beauty*" in *Nineteenth-Century Literature* 54.1(1999): 53-72, and Moira Ferguson *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900: Patriots, Nation, and Empire* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998).
[11] Ruth Padel "Saddled with Ginger: Women, Men, and Horses." *Encounter* 55.5(1980): 47-54, and Gina Dorré, *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006).
[12] Philip Davis, "Victorian Realist Prose and Sentimentality," in *Rereading Victorian Fiction*, eds. Alice Jenkins and Juliet John (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), 13-28, 23.
[13] Fred Kaplan, *Sacred Tears: Sentimentality in Victorian Fiction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), 19.
[14] Regenia Gagnier, *Subjectivities: A History of Self-Representation in Britain, 1832-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 28.
[15] Tess Cosslett *Talking Animals in British Children's Fiction 1786-1914* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate, 2006), 65, 69.
[16] Barbara Noske, *Beyond Boundaries: Humans and Animals* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997), 56-7.
[17] Noske, 82.

[18] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981), 35.
[19] *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 40.
[20] Nicola Brown, "Introduction: Crying Over Little Nell," ***19****: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century*, 4(2007) www.19.bbk.ac.uk.

NOTE ON THE TEXT

Anna Sewell sold copyright of her novel outright and the first edition was published as a complete novel by Jarrold and Sons of London in 1877, with an American edition under the imprint of F.M. Lupton Publishing appearing the same year. Modern editions of *Black Beauty* have frequently used the 1915 Dent edition as copy text. The Dent version modernizes Victorian conventions related to punctuation, paragraphing, and dialogue, truncates the title, and eliminates front and end matter that identifies Sewell as the story's "translator" (including a short note at the end of the text directing the reader to further resources). In the interest of restoring these historical details, the current edition has adopted the first-edition 1877 Jarrold and Sons edition as copy text.

ANNA SEWELL:
A BRIEF CHRONOLOGY

1820	Anna Mary Sewell born March 30, Great Yarmouth, Norfolk; the Sewell family moves to London.
1822	Brother, Philip Sewell, born. Isaac's business fails, and the family move to Dalston.
1824	Mary Sewell writes *Walks With Mama*
1832	Family moves to Stoke, Newington
1835	Anna injures her ankle and becomes semi-invalid
1836	Family moves to Brighton. Anna and her mother, Mary, leave the Society of Friends to join the Church of England
1845	Family moves to Lancing
1845	Anna's health deteriorates
1846	Anna in ill-health; she journeys to Europe for treatment
1858	Mary Sewell begins publishing; the family moves to Wick
1864	Family moves to Bath
1867	Anna and her parents move to Norwich
1871	Sewell confined for health reasons; begins work on *Black Beauty*
1877	*Black Beauty* published by Jarrolds of London
1878	Anna Sewell dies, 25 April, Old Catton, Norfolk

BLACK BEAUTY:
HIS GROOMS AND COMPANIONS.
THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A HORSE

Translated from the original equine
by
Anna Sewell.

To
my dear and honoured
Mother,
whose life, no less than her pen,
has been devoted to the
welfare of others,
this little book
is affectionately
dedicated.

"He was a perfect horseman, and never lost his temper with his horse, talking to and reasoning with it if it shyed or bolted, as if it had been a rational being, knowing that from the fine organisation of the animal, a horse, like a child, will get confused by panic fear, which is only increased by punishment." From the *Life of Charles Kingsley*, Vol. II., page 9.

CONTENTS

PART I.

PART I.

CHAPTER ONE

MY EARLY HOME

The first place that I can well remember, was a large pleasant meadow with a pond of clear water in it. Some shady trees leaned over it, and rushes and water-lilies grew at the deep end. Over the hedge on one side we looked into a ploughed field, and on the other we looked over a gate at our master's house, which stood by the roadside; at the top of the meadow was a plantation of fir trees, and at the bottom a running brook overhung by a steep bank.

Whilst I was young I lived upon my mother's milk, as I could not eat grass. In the day time I ran by her side, and at night I lay down close by her. When it was hot, we used to stand by the pond in the shade of the trees, and when it was cold, we had a nice warm shed near the plantation.

As soon as I was old enough to eat grass, my mother used to go out to work in the day time, and came back in the evening.

There were six young colts in the meadow beside me, they were all older than I was; some were nearly as large as grown-up horses. I used to run with them, and had great fun; we used to gallop all together round and round the field, as hard as we could go. Sometimes we had rather rough play, for they would frequently bite and kick as well as gallop.

One day, when there was a good deal of kicking, my mother whinnied to me to come to her, and then she said,

"I wish you to pay attention to what I am going to say to you. The colts who live here are very good colts; but they are cart-horse colts, and of course, they have not learned manners. You have been well bred and well born; your father has a great name in these parts, and your grandfather won the cup two years at the Newmarket races[1]; your grand-mother had the sweetest temper of any horse I ever knew, and I think you have never seen me kick or bite. I hope you will grow up gentle and good, and never learn bad ways; do your work with a good will, lift your feet up well when you trot, and never bite or kick even in play."

I have never forgotten my mother's advice; I knew she was a wise old horse, and our master thought a great deal of her. Her name was Duchess, but he often called her Pet.

Our master was a good kind man. He gave us good food, good lodging, and kind words; he spoke as kindly to us as he did to his little children; we were all fond of him, and my mother loved him very much. When she saw him at the gate, she would neigh with joy and trot up to him. He would pat and stroke her and say, "Well, old Pet, and how is your little Darkie?" I was a dull black, so he called me Darkie; then he would give me a piece of bread, which was very good, and sometimes he brought a carrot for my mother. All the horses would come to him, but I think we were his favourites. My mother always took him to the town on a market day in a light gig.

There was a ploughboy, Dick, who sometimes came into our field to pluck blackberries from the hedge. When he had eaten all he wanted, he would have, what he called, fun with the colts, throwing stones and sticks at them to make them gallop. We did not much mind him, for we could gallop off; but sometimes a stone would hit and hurt us.

One day he was at this game, and did not know that the master was in the next field; but he was there, watching what was going on: over the hedge he jumped in a snap, and catching Dick by the arm, he gave him such a box on the ear as made him roar with the pain and surprise. As soon as we saw the master, we trotted up nearer to see what went on.

"Bad boy" he said, "bad boy! to chase the colts. This is not the first time, nor the second, but it shall be the last—there—take your money and go home, I shall not want you on my farm again." So we never saw Dick any more. Old Daniel, the man who looked after the horses, was just as gentle as our master, so we were well off.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HUNT

Before I was two years old, a circumstance happened, which I have never forgotten. It was early in the spring; there had been a little frost in the night and a light mist still hung over the plantations and meadows. I, and the other colts were feeding at the lower part of the field, when we heard, quite in the distance, what sounded like the cry of dogs. The oldest of the colts raised his head, pricked his ears, and said “There are the hounds!" and immediately cantered off, followed by the rest of us to the upper part of the field, where we could look over the hedge and see several fields beyond. My mother, and an old riding horse of our master’s were also standing near, and seemed to know all about it.

“They have found a hare,” said my mother, “and if they come this way, we shall see the hunt.”

And soon the dogs were all tearing down the field of young wheat next to ours. I never heard such a noise as they made. They did not bark, nor howl, nor whine, but kept on a “yo! yo, o, o! yo! yo, o, o! yo! yo, o, o,” at the top of their voices. After them came a number of men on horse-back, some of them in scarlet coats, all galloping as fast as they could. The old horse snorted and looked eagerly after them, and we young colts wanted to be galloping with them, but they were soon away into the fields lower down; here, it seemed as if they had come to a stand; the dogs left off barking, and ran about every way with their noses to the ground.

“They have lost the scent,” said the old horse, “perhaps the hare will get off."

“What hare?” I said.

“Oh! I don’t know what hare; likely enough it may be one of our own hares out of the plantation; any hare they can find will do for the dogs and men to run after;” and before long the dogs began their “yo! yo, o, o!" again, and back they came altogether at full speed, making straight for our meadow at the part where the high bank and hedge overhang the brook.

“Now we shall see the hare,” said my mother; and just then a hare wild with fright rushed by, and made for the plantation. On came the dogs, they burst over the bank, leapt the stream, and came dashing across the field,