Straight From the Horse’s Mouth:  
Disciplining the Female Body in Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*

Amanda Meijer  
C-essay  
Handledare: Cecilia Björkén-Nyberg
Abstract

At first glance Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* is merely a story about a horse’s life, adventures and destiny. However, a parallel feminist reading reveals and foregrounds the living conditions for women in Victorian England but since this was a highly controversial issue, she was forced to disguise her true intentions. I support my thesis that Sewell is really dealing with the female body as abused, violently disciplined and prostituted by drawing on a wide range of secondary material such as legal acts and women’s fashion.
## Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... 1  
Contents .......................................................................................................................................... 2  
Introduction .................................................................................................................................... 3  
The Female Perspective .................................................................................................................... 5  
Abusing the Female Body .................................................................................................................. 6  
Disciplining the Female Body ........................................................................................................... 10  
Prostituting the Female Body ........................................................................................................... 13  
Conclusion ....................................................................................................................................... 19  
Works Cited .................................................................................................................................... 21
Introduction

Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse* (1877) is known as a very popular children’s book with over 30 million copies sold (“Black Beauty”). The tale describes the horse Black Beauty’s life from his carefree days as a colt playing in the fields with his friends to his last days as an old horse. We follow him throughout his life from his being brought in to being sold to different masters, kind and less kind ones. *Black Beauty* has become a popular children’s book due to its edifying moral and it does not only teach the children animal welfare but it “also contains allegorical lessons about how to treat people with kindness, sympathy and respect” (“Black Beauty”). Although it appears to be a children’s book at first sight, Anna Sewell originally intended it to be a book for people who handle horses to read and learn about how to treat the animals in the best way possible (“Black Beauty”).

*Black Beauty* is a very straightforward story; it is written from a first person (horse) point of view and we are given the feeling that the story is indeed told by a horse. However, what I am going to do in this essay is to dig deeper into the purpose of *Black Beauty* and argue that it is so much more than merely a story written for children or an illustration of the treatment of Victorian horses. Is it only the innocent book about horses it appears to be? It is suggested that Anna Sewell and a few other female writers in Victorian England wrote with the intention of expressing more with their texts than what they were obviously writing about. In other words, they had an implicit message hidden in the very explicit one.

The writers in question are Sarah Trimmer, Susanna Watts, Elizabeth Heyrick, Anna Sewell, and Frances Power Cobbe, whose texts, in one sense, are doubly gendered: on the one hand, the writers display compassion for subjugated communities; on the other, their compassion for animals conformed to socially prescriptive norms. Hence, gender
and national identity were linked. (Ferguson 1)

My opinion is that Anna Sewell’s implicit message is to express and illuminate the abuse and ill-treatment of women living in Victorian England. In the following quotation Black Beauty’s mother describes different masters’ behaviour although it can also be understood as if she is describing how different types of husbands could treat their wives.

“But,” said she, “there are a great many kinds of men: there are good, thoughtful men like our master that any horse may be proud to serve, but there are bad, cruel men who never ought to have a horse or dog to call their own. Besides, there are a great many foolish men, vain, ignorant and careless, who never trouble themselves to think. These spoil more horses than all, just for want of sense; they don’t mean it, but they do it for all that. 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 a chance for us; but still I say, do your best wherever it is, and keep up your good name. (14)

In order for Anna Sewell and the other female authors mentioned above to be able to express such sensitive issues in this era of strictness and limited rights for women, they had to disguise their real intentions. I claim that Sewell solved this problem by letting the female characters be represented by horses and the male characters by the horses’ masters. For the book to be even more accepted and more widely read, she gendered the main-character (Black Beauty) male and by doing this, she became freer to describe women’s stories and destinies from Black Beauty’s point of view as well as from that of other horses in the novel.
The Female Perspective

I find support for my thesis in Moira Ferguson’s *Animal Advocacy and Englishwomen, 1780-1900* in which she claims that the story about Black Beauty is not merely about horses. Her thesis is that the horses represent the contemporary slave community. She demonstrates this by commenting on Black Beauty’s name, which indicates that the main character and narrator is a black person and the fact that the horses in the book have different masters, just as slaves had. They often worked on plantations and she uses the following quotation to further legitimise her thesis: “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 daytime, and come back in the evening” (qtd. in Ferguson 79). In addition, she brings up the passage where Black Beauty and his mother witness Rob Roy’s being shot to death and how, after this incident, Black Beauty’s mother refuses to go to that part of the field again. Black Beauty later finds out that Rob Roy was his brother (his mother’s son) and Ferguson draws a parallel between this passage and all slave mothers who, similarly to horses, were forced to be separated from their children or sometimes also had to witness their deaths. It is also worth noticing that the name Rob Roy was the name of a celebrated Scottish rebel, comparable to contemporary heroic and rebellious slaves (Ferguson 81).

Ferguson proves her thesis well by providing us with examples of why she believes Black Beauty and his friends represent black people. Moreover, it is an interesting fact that *Black Beauty* was actually banned for a short period of time in South Africa in the mid-fifties when the black South Africans gathered forces to struggle for their future independence (Ferguson 82). However, although Ferguson’s thesis is convincing when it comes to the racial aspect, I feel that she has to some extent ignored the women’s perspective in general. I believe that Anna Sewell chose to use horses to represent women. One reason for her doing so might be
that it is possible to compare women and horses in more ways than one. They were, in fact, treated similarly during this time as is suggested by Gail Doobinin in the introduction to Black Beauty: “Beauty is an unforgettable voice, inspired both by kindness and injustice, a voice that speaks for horse and human alike.” She also argues that “through this process, we even recognize that this horse is a lot like us” (Sewell, “Introduction”). Women in Victorian England did not often have very much to say for themselves and were not often their own persons, but rather the possessions of their husbands, just as a horse is the possession of his master. Women, had no more power over their own bodies than horses had over theirs.

**Abusing the Female Body**

In Black Beauty we read about how the horses are being brought in; how men in different ways abuse and decide how the horses should use their bodies. As for Black Beauty, he has a nice breaking in with a kind master, but as the story continues, he understands that he has been very lucky, especially when he hears poor Ginger’s story later on. She tells him how men have mistreated her while breaking her in at several places she has lived in before she came to where Black Beauty meets her. The following passage pictures Ginger’s first experience of being brought in.

> Several men came to catch me, and when at last they closed me in at one corner of the field, one caught me by the forelock, another caught me by the nose and held it so tight I could hardly draw my breath. Then another took my underjaw in his hard hand and wrenched my mouth open, and so by force they got on the halter and the bar into my mouth. Then one dragged me along by the halter, another flogging behind, and this was the first experience I had of men’s kindness – it was all force. (27)
Imagine Sewell intending this quotation to be about a woman instead of a horse. It is a rather brutal description of what I picture to be a rape of a woman, not only by one man, but by several. Already in the very beginning of the book we are given such an awful example of what men were able to do to women. It explains how they chase her, catch her and make her take ‘things’ in her mouth. Moreover, as if this was not enough, she has to go through it more than once since it was only “the first experience I had of men’s kindness” (27).

Women being treated in this rough way were often not able to do or say anything for themselves since men were the ones with power and saw it as their right to control and do what they liked to their women. Ginger continues to tell Black Beauty how she was ill-used by another master in such a way that he abused her and hit her as soon as she did not do as he wanted or she happened to do something he did not approve of.

This man was as hard-tempered and hard-handed as Samson. He always spoke in a rough, impatient voice, and if I did not move in the stall the moment he wanted me, he would hit me above the hocks, with his stable broom or the fork, whichever he might have in his hand. Everything he did was rough and I began to hate him. He wanted me to be afraid of him, but I was too high-mettled for that and one day when he had aggravated me more than usual, I bit him, which of course put him in a great rage and he began to hit me about the head with a riding whip. (34)

Through Ginger we are introduced to different, but equally horrible, stories of various kinds of abuse. Does Ginger represent an unfortunate woman who happens to marry different men who were all very mean to her or are we just, through her, allowed to hear about different examples of women’s possible destinies? Whichever the case, this master well represents the ‘hitting’ husband, who would hit his woman as soon as she did not do as she was told or if she did not do it fast enough or for some other reason he found to give him an opportunity to
strike her. Furthermore, she describes how the man wants her to be afraid of him; he needs to
have the power and feel that he is number one, which is most likely also why he is even more
furious if the woman in question at some point dares to say what she feels or tries to protect or
defend herself by hitting, kicking or biting him back.

Reading this book from a woman’s perspective is no uplifting business; the language directed
at women is rough and filled with violence: “‘Go along you lazy beast!’ And then another
slash of the whip, when all the time we are doing our very best to get along, uncomplaining
and obedient, though often sorely harassed and down hearted” (132). Occasionally, one
cannot help but wonder whether it could really be as bad as the book pictures it to be many
times. Unfortunately, however, it was not very rare with this sort of treatment of women; on
the contrary, “her husband had the generally-accepted right to beat her into a state of cringing
submissiveness, as he did his horse or dog” (Bauer and Ritt 99). Evidently, women did not
have much to say or do to protect themselves from their abusing husbands. Was there nothing
then that could be done for those women? What did the English law say about abuse and
mistreatment of women?

In the Victorian era attention began to be given to the treatment of animals. Before, animals
had been seen mostly as a tool or as a machine which you used to earn your livelihood. But
then people started to become more aware of animals’ wellbeing and, as a consequence,
legislation for the rights of animals began to take form. It began with the passing of the Cruel
Treatment of Cattle Act 1822 (Turner 39) followed by the Cruelty to Animals Act 1835, later
replaced by Cruelty to Animals Act 1849 (“Cruelty to Animals Act 1835”). In other words,
the law finally took animals’ rights seriously. Even though these laws were not completely
satisfying and the organisation fighting for the animals’ rights was new and still unstable, the
Cruel Treatment of Cattle Act, sometimes also referred to as Martin’s Act, can be considered a milestone (Turner 40).

So, having established that things started to happen in legislation during this time regarding animals’ rights, what happened in the area of women’s rights? They certainly needed a similar protection according to the article entitled “A Husband Is a Beating Animal” where Bauer and Ritt state that many women lived in “animal-like existence” (100). The maltreatment of women during this time was not an unknown problem, however. “In the late 19th century, English court records attested to a daily average of four cases of aggravated assaults of husbands on wives” (100). The problem was certainly huge and the figures only show the cases that were brought to the attention of a court. However, the legal system did not support the wives; by contrast, it “mirrored the public acceptance of wife-beating and, in turn, reinforced it.” A man and a woman were supposed to be united as one soul through marriage. In reality, though, the wife became the inferior party as her husband’s “servant or vassal.” Furthermore, the husband was allowed to punish or correct his wife physically “if necessary” (102) and he had “‘Power and Dominion over his Wife,’ he might ‘keep her by Force within the Bounds of Duty,’ and might ‘beat her but not in a violent or cruel Manner.’” In addition, as if this was not enough, the courts were often lenient towards the offenders and interpreted these paragraphs very freely so that a husband’s authority may paradoxically be expanded even further (103). Thus, it could be argued that animals were better off than women, at least regarding their rights according to the English law. The reason for this might be that it was not as controversial to talk about how you beat your animal as it was to talk about how to stop beating your wife.
Disciplining the Female Body

Sewell keeps hinting throughout the novel that men are evil and that they think they can have things just the way they like even if it is against nature. This is the case with the check-rein, sometimes also referred to as the bearing rein, which makes the horses hold their heads up in a high, very unnatural position. It is, moreover, very uncomfortable because it usually holds its head in a lower position, for example, when going up a steep hill to be able to pull the wagon after itself with the strength of its whole body. When their heads are fixed in a high position, they cannot use their bodies adequately and therefore, it is much more injurious for them to work in that position. Like the check-rein, the corset was used for fashion and made, if not actually by men, then at least to please men. The check-rein makes the horses go in a “more stylish” way with their heads held high. Similarly, the corset makes a woman’s body look more fashionable. “I had been driven with a check-rein by the dealer, and I hated it worse than anything else; but in this place we were reined far tighter, the coachman and his master thinking we looked more stylish so” (32). It is possible to read this statement as if made by a woman talking about her wearing a corset; she did not like it but had to wear it even more tightly laced because her husband found it stylish.

Thus, the reason they had to wear these bearing reins and corsets was fashion. It was trendy at the time to look in a certain way. “I suppose it was fashion that makes them strap our heads up with those horrid bits that I was tortured with in London” (43). The corset presents the human body in a certain shape. You were not allowed to see what a woman really looked like, but only the shape in which the corset forms it. But why did they have to be in a certain shape? Max, Black Beauty’s new partner after Ginger, explains to him the reasons put forward by one gentleman on this topic: “‘Because,’ said he, ‘people won’t buy them unless we do. The London people always want their horses to carry their heads high and to step high.
Of course it is very bad for the horses, but then it is good for trade. The horses soon wear up, or get diseased, and they come for another pair”” (104-5). The horses were not considered “fine enough” to be bought unless they wore the bearing rein. Similarly, according to Mel Davies, the author of “Corsets and Conception,” a woman had to follow these rules of fashion to be completely accepted in society. It was considered to be a very serious matter to ignore lacing your waist. In fact, to be unlaced was considered a sin with the risk of being excluded from the respectable ranks in society. Since status was paramount, not many women were willing to take that risk (Davies 619).

As is evident too, people in London used the bearing rein because they wanted their horses to carry their heads high and to step high. Horses’ bodies and ways of walking and working differ from each other in the same way as women’s do. The bearing rein and the corset made them look more the same; they were moulded in one shape, the shape men favoured. Additionally, the check-rein and the corset affected the walking of both horses and women. The bearing reins sometimes resulted in higher steps for the horses and the corsets could bring about the so called kangaroo walk that women occasionally developed when wearing tightly laced corsets (“La Corsetiere”).

As mentioned briefly above, the horse and the woman do not only look better with the bearing rein or the corset but what is even worse, they are both hurt too. Ginger tells us about how bad it is for her body to use the check-rein; it aches and she finds it hard to breathe. “Besides the soreness in my mouth and the pain in my neck, it always made my windpipe feel bad, and if I had stopped there long I know it would have spoiled my breathing” (33) Imagine yourself wearing a tightly laced corset. It would most probably make your body ache and affect your breathing. But why did people expose themselves and their bodies, or to be more precise, their
wives’ bodies to this kind of treatment? It may be assumed that people did not know better at the time and if something is aesthetically pleasing, men would want their wives to wear it despite a little discomfort. However, Sewell suggests that people actually did know about the harm that could be caused by these styles of fashion. Through Max, she indicates that at least some people knew about the consequences of wearing the bearing rein/corset.

He had always been used to the tight rein. I asked him how it was he bore it. “Well,” he said, “I bear it because I must, but it is shortening my life, and it will shorten yours too, if you have to stick to it.” “Do you think,” I said, “that our masters know how bad it is for us?” “I can’t say,” he replied, “but the dealers and the horse doctors know it very well.” (104)

The fact that the harmful consequences of corsets were known is confirmed by Mel Davies, who in his article details the significant consequences of corset wearing, especially for pregnant women:

*Tight lacing* is the chief cause of infantile mortality . . . by girting [sic] in the lungs, stomach, heart, diaphragm, etc., it cripples everyone of the life-manufacturing functions, impairs circulation, prevents muscular action, and lays siege to the child-bearing citadel itself. . . . It often destroys germinal life before or soon after birth, by most effectively cramping, inflaming and weakening the vital apparatus and stopping the flow of life at its fountain head. . . . If this murderous practice continues another generation, it will bury all middle and upper classes of women and children and leave propagation to the coarse grained but healthy, lower classes. . . . Let those who had rather bury than raise their children, marry tight lacers. (qtd. in Davies 1)

Moreover, the quotation suggests that it was not the women themselves who chose how hard to lace their corsets, it was their husbands. Women had to bear the pain, breathing problems and damage the corset caused them for the sake of their husbands.
As mentioned already at the beginning of this chapter, in a patriarchal system men subject everything to their needs, whether it is a horse or a woman. “They always think they can improve upon Nature and mend what God has made” (47). The quotation is taken from the passage where Ginger explains how much she dislikes it when men put blinkers on her; it is very unnatural for a horse to wear blinkers since their eyes are not set in the middle of their foreheads. This can be interpreted as men’s way of “blinding” women or, again, disciplining them. They discipline women’s way of seeing the world. Women are only allowed to look ahead and follow the path that men have already walked. Women are not allowed or able to see the world from her own point of view or go her own way.

**Prostituting the Female Body**

In the Victorian era prostitution in Britain was not an unusual phenomenon and Judith Walkowitz presents it as follows in *Prostitution and Victorian Society*:

An object of fascination and disgust, the prostitute was ingrained in public consciousness as a highly visible symbol of the social dislocation attendant upon the new industrial era. By the 1850s prostitution had become ‘the Great Social Evil,’ not simply an affront to morality, but a vital aspect of the social economy as well. (32).

I am going to discuss the chapters about the horse fair and Black Beauty’s life in London in terms of Victorian prostitution. In the novel Beauty and his friends are pictured as victims who have to work hard, risk being abused and are unable to do much about their situation. It was a widespread opinion that women actually chose themselves to make their living out of prostitution rather than being forced into this situation. Maybe Anna Sewell’s intentions are to convince us of the opposite and imply that these women in fact were victims of a very
peculiar Victorian society where, at the same time as poverty was very common, the way to gain status was through money and material possessions (Walkowitz 21).

Women who had to support themselves due to their being orphans, widows, single or simply because their families could not afford to support them any longer, sometimes had to make their living by walking the streets. Seen from a superficial point of view, prostitution meant easily earned money and social independence since you did not have to work in some oppressive regime. However, the disadvantages of prostitution outweighed any possible advantages. It was not a safe way to earn your living and although you could be considered socially independent, you escaped neither insecurity nor poverty. Instead you were exposed to the risks of physical danger, alcoholism, venereal disease and police harassment. This is exemplified in the novel when Black Beauty reunites with his friend Ginger, who is now working as a cab horse in London. You can clearly see how she suffers from her life on the London streets and how her body is worn out. It is shown through her bad breathing which is most probably a result of having walked the streets in bad weather and late at night. Furthermore, her body is tainted by marks which may suggest her having contracted venereal disease such as syphilis, for instance.

It was Ginger! But how changed! The beautifully arched and glossy neck was now straight and lank and fallen in; the clean, straight legs and delicate fetlocks were swelled; the joints were grown out of shape with hard work; the face, that was once so full of spirit and life was now full of suffering, and I could tell by the heaving of her sides, and her frequent cough, how bad her breath was. (qtd. in Oswald 143)

Black Beauty becomes sad but also a little surprised since Ginger always used to stand up for herself. When he asks her about this, she answers: “‘Ah!’ she said. ‘I did once, but it’s no use; men are strongest, and if they are cruel and have no feeling, there is nothing that we can do,
but just bear it, bear it on and on to the end. I wish the end was come; I wish I was dead’’ (qtd. in Oswald 143). Oswald, moreover, suggests that Black Beauty and his friends are pictured as helpless victims and that anti-cruelty was a common theme of 19th century fiction. It is not far-fetched to assume that the treatment that Ginger testifies to in the quotations above could have been endured by many women too.

Despite the risks involved in prostitution, many women chose this as a lesser evil; a likely reason is, as mentioned above, that in Victorian society status was valued very highly and it was to a great extent demonstrated by material possessions. To be able to gain status, many women chose to give up their self-respect and sell themselves to men (Walkowitz 21). In other words, Victorian society had such an influence on people that they would rather give up their self-respect in order to afford material possessions to gain status.

To some extent, it is possible to compare Black Beauty’s time in London to a prostitute’s existence. Already in the Victorian period, London was a rather big city where prostitutes more easily found clients than in more local places. Black Beauty tells us about cab horses of which he is one himself. Yet, he is lucky enough to be owned by his own master and thus enjoys a certain degree of independence but he knows about many cab horses that are in the possession of men, “pimps,” who own a number of horses and cabs which they let out to different drivers, who could be seen as sex buyers. The system with pimps and brothels was not very common at this time but it existed (Walkowitz 24-5). Ginger is unfortunate enough to end up in such a place where she is let out to different drivers and is again very ill-used. Being forced to earn your livelihood on prostitution was never a safe way of living and, as mentioned above, you always risked being abused and falling ill. Neither did it pay enough and you had to have a day job as well, such as doing someone’s laundry or something
comparable (Walkowitz 24). Being forced to work all day and then during the night as well, often made you totally worn out and mentally distressed. Ginger gives us a glimpse of her life in London by describing how much she has to work for the men who pay for her and how they abuse her if she does not work hard enough: “That is what they are doing, whipping and working with never one thought of what I suffer – they paid for me, and must get it out of me, they say. The man who hires me now pays a deal of money to the owner every day, and so he has to get it out of me too; and so it’s all the week round and round, with never a Sunday rest” (196).

The London horses in *Black Beauty* are pictured very much as passive victims without the strength or courage to stand up for themselves any longer. According to Walkowitz, the view of Victorian prostitutes as victimised should be challenged. However, although she claims that there were other job opportunities, they were in reality very few (Walkowitz 20-1). Maybe the message Anna Sewell tries to communicate is that prostitutes actually must be considered to be victims since they more often than not did not have any other choice to earn money in order to survive.

In addition to the chapters about Black Beauty’s stay in London, there is one which I would like to bring up in my comparison with Victorian prostitutes, “A Horse Fair.” During this trading event the horses were supposed to show off from their best side so that someone would like to buy them. This makes me think of prostitutes walking up and down the street, showing off and trying to attract customers. The following quotation gives a good picture of how various prostitutes in a street could act and look like:

> They were throwing out their legs and showing off their paces in high style, . . . But round in the background there were a number of poor things, sadly broken down with
hard work, with their knees knuckling over . . . And there were some very dejected-looking old horses, with the underlip hanging down and the ears lying back heavily, as if there was no more pleasure in life, and no more hope. There were some so thin you might see all their ribs, and some with old sores on their backs and hips. These were sad sights for a horse to look upon who knows not but he may come to the same state. (151)

Considering the fact that prostitutes had to work very hard both during the day and at night in order to earn enough money, it does not come as a surprise that these women looked thin, worn out and seemed to have not the faintest hope in the world.

The novel also allows us a view of the variety of sex-buyers. In the following quotation Black Beauty describes different horse buyers. However, the passage may be read as a list of various forms of behaviour displayed by men who are on the look-out for a prostitute: “It was wonderful what a difference there was in the way these things were done. Some did it in a rough, offhand way, as if one was only a piece of wood; while others would take their hands gently over one’s body, with a pat now and then, as much as to say, “By your leave.” Of course I judged a good deal of the buyers by their manners myself” (152).

We learn that some of them were gentle while others were very rough and did not care much if the bought object was hurt or not. Black Beauty also tells us that they wished some particular men would buy them since they were cleaner than others.

There was one man, I thought, if he would buy me, I should be happy. He was not a gentleman, nor yet one of the loud, flashy sort that called themselves so. He was rather a small man, but well made and quick in all his motions. I knew in a moment by the way he handled me that he was used to horses. He spoke gently, and his gray eye had a kindly, cheery look in it. It may seem strange to say – but it is true all the same – that
the clean, fresh smell there was about him made me take to him: *no smell of old beer

*and tobacco*, which I hated, but a fresh smell as if he had come out of a hayloft. (152-3)

To sum up, it was sometimes believed that women chose prostitution as their occupation because it meant easily earned money which they did not have to work very hard for. What Sewell does is to show us the negative sides of a life as a prostitute through her description of the different horses’ destinies in *Black Beauty*. Through the horses we learn that, when working as a prostitute, you are always at risk no matter how hard you work. (Sewell 197 and Walkowitz 31) You are also very likely to become totally worn out since working as a prostitute at night often did not pay enough, which forced you to find a day job as well. (Sewell 196 and Walkowitz 24) Moreover, you always ran the risk of catching venereal diseases (Walkowitz 31). Sewell wants us to see what men and society do to those women and how they suffer. She sets out to portray these women as the victims they really were.
Conclusion

Women in Victorian England were to a great extent abused and disciplined by men. They were not allowed to be their own persons with thoughts and rights of their own. They were the possessions of their husbands and had to follow a path approved of by patriarchal society. If a woman had a strong will of her own, she was often abused and mistreated in different ways and left in the same state as poor Ginger in the novel (195-7). Anna Sewell wants to show us the oppression of women and to be able to do so; she is forced to conceal her true intentions. She does this by having horses represent the women in her book, the reason for which is that the lives of horses and women were, in fact, very similar during this period of time. Women had no more rights than an animal and, moreover, her husband actually had the right to treat her as one (Bauer and Ritt 99, 102, 108).

Furthermore, Sewell genders her main character Black Beauty male. He is the one telling the story because it is more acceptable to listen to a man’s voice. Thus, Sewell is more at liberty to openly express different women’s destinies without losing respect among her readers. One of the women’s destinies we learn about is Ginger’s, who is a very unfortunate character. She is a female horse with an enormous will of her own. However, she is ill-treated her entire life and ends up dead in London because she is totally worn out and her will is finally broken. The brief explanation she gives Black Beauty as to why her life turns into such a misery succinctly sums up the book’s message; quite simply “men are strongest” (196). The information Sewell keeps giving us throughout the story is that men are in charge, men are evil and men have the need to control and discipline their women. In the beginning of the novel, the little pony Merrylegs hints at girls being nicer than boys and maybe he is not all wrong when he states as follows: “It is not them, it is the boys; boys,” said he, shaking his mane, ‘are quite different, they must be broken in, as we were broken in when we were colts, and just be taught what’s
what” (38). What Sewell may try to express through Merrylegs is that men will not themselves realise and accept that there should be equality between the sexes – they have to be taught so. Through her book Sewell makes us see that women are oppressed. She convinces her reader why it is important to teach men about gender equality. If we fail to do so, women will carry on being mistreated and disciplined, for as long as men are allowed to behave in the superior way that is illustrated in *Black Beauty*. 
Works Cited


<http://www.victorianbazaar.com/corsets.html>


<www.bookrags.com>