# The First-Person Horse:
# A Study of Narrative Perspective, Empathy, and Animal Welfare

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## Abstract in Norwegian

Denne masteroppgaven utforsker litterære dyr og hvordan disse kan representere seg selv og sin art. Oppgaven har som mål å undersøke hvilken betydning den animalske synsvinkelen og fortellerstemmen har for teksten, og hvordan litterære dyr kan fremme kunnskap om dyrevelferd. Jeg har tatt utgangspunkt i de to romanene *Black Beauty* / *Silkesvarten* (1877) av Anna Sewell, og *War Horse* / *War Horse – Krigshesten* (1982) av Michael Morpurgo. Her forteller to hester fra førstepersons perspektiv, hvilket er essensielt for hvordan bøkene blir lest og for hvordan teksten driver frem empati for hesten hos leseren. Oppgavens teoretiske grunnlag er fra fagfeltet dyrestudier (*animal studies*), som jeg spesifiserer ved å bruke uttrykket litterære dyrestudier (*literary animal studies*). Dette blir forklart i introduksjonen.

Kapittel 1 tar for seg bøkenes utgivelse og historiske kontekst, da dette er viktig for å forstå hvilken kulturell innflytelse disse tekstene kan ha hatt, da de ble publisert og frem til i dag. Bøkenes omtale blir diskutert, også i sammenheng med sjangeren de er plassert i, barnelitteratur. Poenget er å identifisere samfunnsfunksjoner tekstene kan ha for dyrevelferd, vet at både unge og eldre lesere får innblikk i dyreperspektiv.

Kapittel 2 utforsker fortellerstemmen og synspunktet i tekstene. Ved at hestene selv forteller om sitt eget liv og erfaringer, får vi lesere et nytt perspektiv på oss selv og hvordan mennesker behandler andre skapninger. Her er det to litterære virkemidler som er sentrale: Mieke Bals fokalisering (*focalisation*) og Viktor Shklovskys ukjentgjøring (*defamiliarisation*). Disse konseptene jobber sammen for å sette hestens synspunkt i kontrast med menneskets, som om det virkelig er et dyr som forteller sin historie.

Kapittel 3 studerer hvordan tekstene får leseren til å føle empati først og fremst med de litterære dyrene. Diskusjonen er basert på to professorer, Martha Nussbaum og hennes narrativ fantasi (*narrative imagination*), sammen med Suzanne Keen og hennes narrativ empati (*narrative empathy*). Disse to konseptene er sammensatt: narrativ fantasi leder til narrativ empati gjennom bøkenes formidling av livet som hest. Jeg tar i bruk Keens tre former for strategisk empati og demonstrerer eksempler av disse i begge romanene: ambassadørlig empati (*ambassadorial*), bundet empati (*bounded*), og kringkastet empati (*broadcast*).

I tillegg til barnelitteratur anser jeg bøkene som realistisk dyrelitteratur; tekster som fremmer tanken om at dyr har egenverdi uavhengig av den verdien mennesket har tilegnet dem. Det er fortsatt mange som ikke tenker slik, og derfor er litteratur som *Silkesvarten* og *Krigshesten* viktig for å fremme respekt og omtanke for hesten spesielt, og dyr generelt.

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## Introduction

What is it like to be an animal?[1] This thought may occur once in a while, because we are unable to accurately experience what it is like to be something other than human. Unfortunately, animals cannot tell us how it is themselves, as they do not use verbal language like we do. We are left with imagining what their lives are like, whether it be domestic life as a companion animal, or life in the wild. As a result, animals have been written about in various forms in an extended literary tradition. Professor Mario Robles points out in his book *Literature and Animal Studies* (2016) that as long as literature has existed, animals have existed both beside us and inside the literature that has been written, but they are not normally the primary matter.[2] Before a notable shift in nineteenth century literature, 'animals appeared as significant figures in English literature only strictly in terms of metaphor', serving to enhance human characteristics, English professors Mary Allen and Susan McHugh point out.[3] McHugh gives the example of the poet Percy Shelley, who employs the nightingale as a metaphor for the artistic abilities of poets. This suggests that metaphor may be 'unable to bear animal agency', that the animal character cannot represent the animal it is shaped as.[4] In contrast, recent literature is more likely to have animal characters resemble their natural selves, as the 'widespread use of animals in modern literature dates from the last quarter of the nineteenth century', a trend possibly started by Anna Sewell and her *Black Beauty* (1877).[5] Her book is told from the first-person perspective of a horse, Black Beauty, who represents real horses in the Victorian period. Placing *Black Beauty* in conversation with another horse narrator, Joey from Michael Morpurgo's *War Horse* (1982), this thesis will discuss literary animals and how their voices can represent themselves and advocate animal welfare.

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[1] "Animal, noun 1," *Compact Oxford English Dictionary for University and College Students*, eds. Catherine Soanes and Sarah Hawker (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 33: 'a living organism that can move about of its own accord and has specialized sense organs and nervous system.' In this thesis, the term 'animal' refers to living creatures distinguished from homo sapiens, humans. Humans are also strictly animals, but for the sake of clarity 'animal' is here separate from 'human'.

[2] Mario Ortiz Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016), 2.

[3] Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 7, 222 (footnote 13).

[4] McHugh, *Animal Stories,* 7.

[5] William H. Magee, "The Animal Story: A Challenge in Technique," *The Dalhousie Review* 44, no. 2 (1964), 157.

**Animals in Literature**

The presence of animals in literature has been 'as marginal as it has been constant'.[6] They have always been there, sometimes significant to the plot, but remain in the background, as exemplified by the noble steed that accompanies a hero, like Don Quixote's Rocinante. Robles argue that 'animals as we know them are a literary invention', seeing literature as part of establishing the distinction between human and animal, privileging the human with special traits the animal does not have.[7] He points to Aristotle's 'political animal', Descartes' 'animal with soul', and Heidegger's 'time-keeping animal' as examples of how humans, using reason, can discuss, be aware of time, and do great things with their cognitive and intellectual abilities that animals do not have access to.[8] Written language, for instance, is one of the defining lines between humans and animals.[9] Literature elevates the human above the animal based on those traits that make humans unique. A creature that is bereft of a soul and awareness of politics and time is less than human. Thus, animals remain inferior, in real life as in literature, because writing shapes the way we think about animals, and about how we think about ourselves in relation to them.

While literature can shape negative attitudes towards animals, it can also encourage positive ones. With the ability to play with characters and perspectives, texts can turn the world around for the reader to observe humans in the way humans observe animals. This is in theory beneficial for the individual reader, who may get a new understanding of different creatures, and their attitude towards animals might change once they get an insight into what it is potentially like to be on the receiving end of human treatment, good and bad. This is the concern of this thesis, where two novels of animal perspectives are challenging readers to empathise with those who are a different species.

Animal characters are most often found in literature for children, and in the majority of the cases they appear as allegories in moral tales, or merely as humans in animal bodies.[10] Many moral tales are from medieval bestiaries and Aesop's *Fables*, such as *The Tortoise and the Hare*, *The Lion and the Mouse*, and *The Fox and the Crow*. Such characters are often talking, wearing human clothing, or living in social communities, as they do in the more modern

[6] Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies*, 1.
[7] Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies*, 2.
[8] Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies*, 3.
[9] Matthew Calarco, "Animal Studies," *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory* 25, no. 1 (2017), 48.
[10] Margo DeMello, "Introduction," in *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing,* ed. Margo DeMello (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1.

example of Kenneth Grahame's *Wind in the Willows* (1908), where the animals have picnics, row in a boat, and drive a horse cart. Such representations lead to the assumption that literary animals as 'more suitable to children', because imagination has no boundaries in a child's understanding of reality.[11] Scholar Tess Cosslett suggests that literary animals are to be found in children's literature due to the Romantic notion of children as being closer to nature than adults, thereby assuming that children are more similar to animals, a missing link between adults and nonhumans.[12] Author John Berger also points to old connections between animals and children: Aristotle thought that children were hardly any different from animals on a psychological level.[13] The youngest cannot talk, are dependent, and unintelligent compared to adult humans, like animals. During the industrial revolution, both animals and children were construed as machines, objects to be used for the sake of production and efficiency.[14]

Allegorically, animals have appeared in books as a way to teach children about the natural order of things: humans are superior to animals, and some animals are superior to other animals.[15] Children often learned that the animals most highly valued were the ones who understood 'their subordinate position' and accepted it, examples being domestic animals such as horses and dogs, in addition to cattle, sheep and pigs.[16] These are animals that are highly useful to humans, for food, clothing, transport, and hunting, and thus valued the most, so it is therefore no surprise that the dog and the horse are the two most depicted nonhuman species in literature.[17] Dogs and horses are the two species that are closely connected to humans and have served for millennia. Positive treatment of these animals was encouraged, but only to the extent where such treatment would ultimately benefit the humans, because 'in no case … should concern for animals eclipse concern for other human beings.'[18] This is where the new and modern link with the field of animal studies comes into effect.

Literary animals slowly changed from the late eighteenth century onwards. According to Allen, the nonhuman narrator developed during this period, initially used as satire in France,

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[11] Tess Cosslett, "Child's Place in Nature: Talking Animals in Victorian Children's Fiction," *Nineteenth Century Contexts* 23, no. 4 (2002), 476.
[12] Cosslett, "Child's Place in Nature," 475.
[13] John Berger, "Why Look at Animals?" in *The Animals Reader: The Essential Classic and Contemporary Writings*, eds. Linda Kalof and Amy Fitzgerald (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 255.
[14] Berger, "Why Look at Animals," 256.
[15] Harriet Ritvo, "Learning from Animals: Natural History for Children in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Children's Literature* 13 (1985), 80-81.
[16] Ritvo, "Learning from Animals," 83-84.
[17] Lori Jo Oswald, "Heroes and Victims: Stereotyping the Animal Character in Children's Realistic Animal Fiction," *Children's Literature in Education* 26, no. 2 (1995), 140.
[18] Ritvo, "Learning from Animals," 82.

but gradually became more serious along with the humanitarian attitudes that grew simultaneously.[19] Human beings were still on top of the food chain, but people such as Jeremy Bentham, who in his *Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation* (1789) asked the rhetorical question of whether animals can suffer, helped a new attitude emerge. Along with this, Allen also proposes that the emergence of children's literature developed the possibility of representing an 'animal's own account of his suffering', because talking animals were not absurd in children's literature.[20] Such representation of an animal was 'ushered in by *Black Beauty*', writer Ruth Padel suggests.[21] The horse story's widespread success and innovation in storytelling opened up to more stories that are similar to it, particularly with animal characters representing their real selves. Now they were portrayed like actual animals with agency, and with a human voice that speaks on behalf of the welfare of the animal.

**Animal Representations**

In the introduction to the edited volume *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing* (2015), editor Margo DeMello argues that 'what is important about literary representations of animal minds isn't whether or not they're accurate: it's what they reveal about how humans think about animals, and what the consequences of that thinking' are.[22] *Black Beauty* is evidence that there were individuals who considered horses to be worthy of moral obligation, by the very existence of the book as a protest against cruelty. The novel is also evidence that there are humans who do not consider animals to be anything other than tools and machines to be used at human disposal. By highlighting different types of attitudes, many pieces of animal literature may aim to make readers aware of human behaviour towards animals, as Demello suggests, and attempt to challenge and change it. The abuse the narrator Beauty and his equine friends experience is a representation of real abuse suffered by animals as a consequence of the traditional view that animals are of lower status than humans.

Accuracy is still necessary to a degree, nonetheless. Though the novel reveals a great deal about how humans have used horses, realistic portrayal is preferable in order for readers to believe Sewell's arguments about the horse and its complicated relationship to humans. By using horses as representatives of victims of human abuse, Sewell takes on an important responsibility of attempting to portray horses and humans as realistically as possible in order

[19] Mary Allen, *Animals in American Literature* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 5.
[20] Allen, *Animals in American Literature*, 5.
[21] Ruth Padel, "Saddled with Ginger: Women, Men & Horses," *Encounter* 55, no. 5 (1980), 54.
[22] DeMello, "Introduction," 10.

for changes to be implemented in real life. One of the issues adult readers may have with the notion of nonhuman narrators is the simple fact that animals cannot speak and therefore such a novel is immediately construed as absurd and unworthy of attention to such readers. Communicating on behalf of an animal using words is in itself inaccurate, and therefore accuracy may be construed as an obscure requirement on this fundamental level, which may be part DeMello's point. However, the animal character may still relay a certain amount of realism in terms of descriptions of its biology, behaviour, and relation to humans, which adds plausibility to the text. Realism urges the reader to engage with and rethink Western culture of companion animals. If the text in question is attempting to change attitudes, then realism to a degree of familiarity is necessary for the reader to recognise traits that can be changed. This in turn may encourage readers to alter their own behaviour in accordance to the book's suggestions, or at least give readers the notion that animals are sensitive creatures too.

Absolute accuracy is also problematic. A completely objective and accurate story about animals becomes repetitive, scholar William Magee argues in his discussion about author Charles G. D. Roberts.[23] Roberts has written several fictional works about the primary concerns of animals, their natures and habits, mainly ensuring sustenance and survival, examples being *The Kindred of the Wild* (1902) and *Hoof and Claw* (1913). Magee suggests that Roberts 'developed a powerful new literary form' and genre: the animal story, where the animal characters are 'convincingly nonhuman', they 'do not talk, and their thoughts are single, immediate, and simple', along with habitual and instinctive behaviour.[24] Men appear as a kind of animal in these tales of survival of the fittest, but as Magee points out, they emerge more often in Robert's later works, as he turns to human characters for more variety in his writing.[25] Even if one accepts objective representation, it restricts active emotional engagement with the text, as there is an anonymous and detached narration that struggles to keep the reader's interest. For purposes of engagement and empathy it seems necessary to include elements of imagination when placing oneself in the mind of an animal, otherwise there is no variety in the type of story. As soon as there are human elements in the story, the range of emotions to play with is wider. As Magee states, 'stories of animals living only for themselves must still appeal to readers that are human.'[26]

[23] Magee, "The Animal Story," 159, 161.
[24] Magee, "The Animal Story," 159.
[25] Magee, "The Animal Story," 161.
[26] Magee, "The Animal Story," 164.

Scholar Lori Jo Oswald praises Roberts as one of the founders of what she terms realistic animal fiction, as she argues in favour of animal stories that take a step away from victimizing animals in favour of portraying them realistically in children's literature.[27] She defines realistic animal fiction as works in which 'the authors attempt to portray realistic animals, behaving in natural ways (i.e. in ways that humans generally expect that species to behave). The animal characters … are characters in and of themselves.'[28] Oswald is advocating texts that portray animals as realistically as possible, which is in agreement with my own position, because realistic animal texts can be respectful towards animals, an attitude that in turn can contribute to better animal welfare. The advantage is to show an animal's life as it is, strong and intelligent in its own way, yet also dangerous and brutal. As pointed out, however, these stories can become repetitive and less literary, making the reader wish for a more interesting text, otherwise they may instead read nonfiction literature about animals. Realistic animal fiction would be an excellent introduction to animals in literature, but it needs something literary to keep readers engaged. The horse narrator is one such element that makes *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* interesting novels to read, while representing horses realistically at the same time.

Oswald is of the view that *Black Beauty* 'is not a realistic novel because the horse narrates his own story', a definition that also applies to *War Horse*, but paradoxically her article defends 'the early authors … the founders' such as Roberts and Ernest Thompson Seton, who write realistic animal fiction from 'a wild animal's point of view', albeit from a third-person perspective.[29] A horse's point of view and a bear's point of view are still both animal perspectives, one is not more or less valid than the other, as they are both still mediated through human language. In my view, both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* qualify as realistic because they resemble 'a model of everyday life' to a credible degree, here specifically the use of horses in England in the 1870s, and the use of farm horses as well as war horses in the early twentieth century.[30] The first-person narration from a horse's perspective may be a point of issue, because animals cannot talk or write a book, but this does not invalidate the reality of horse abuse that *Black Beauty* vouches for. Nor does such a narrative invalidate *War Horse*'s representation of war horses in World War I (henceforth WWI). It is possible to have realistic animal fiction while employing a nonhuman narrator, because it challenges the mind to imagine something other than the human experience.

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[27] Oswald, "Heroes and Victims," 149.
[28] Lori Jo Oswald, "Environmental and Animal Rights Ethics in Children's Realistic Animal Novels of Twentieth-Century North America," PhD diss., University of Oregon (1994), 16.
[29] Oswald, "Heroes and Victims," 140, 136.
[30] Jeremy Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, 4th ed. (London: Arnold, 2001), 56.

**Literary Animal Studies**

In order to consider *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* as pieces of literature in contexts of animal welfare, I turn to animal studies, a theoretical approach that have animals as its objects of study. Animal studies emerged in the 1980s and is rapidly gaining ground in the twenty-first century, the concerns for nonhuman beings increasing along with concerns for the environment and its accompanying field ecocriticism.[31] Philosopher Cary Wolfe has an accurate description when it comes to animal studies: attempting to create an overview of current research within the field is 'like herding cats'.[32] It is a broad field encompassing biology, ecology, ethology, philosophy and ethics, as well as literature. The field considers animals on their own as well as in relation to humans, concerned with how animals are perceived and treated, often with explicit advocacy for nonhuman beings, a criterion I see as important. This thesis aims to contribute to the field of animal studies by maintaining a framework based on the concern of the representation of real animals in literature. I am placing myself within the confines of literature, but other fields, particularly history and philosophy, are indispensable to discussions of animals in a human context.

For clarity I am using the term 'literary animal studies' when alluding to animal studies in relation to literature in this thesis. There is a variety of terms that can be used to describe this approach, and critics ask many questions for consideration which makes it difficult to settle with one term that satisfies all research areas. Animal studies is the first term that was used, now an umbrella term for everything related to animals. It is an inadequate term because it is ambiguous when referring to a specific field, as well employing the word animal, referring to a broad category of all living organisms with nervous systems. In his 2009 article, professor Michael Lundblad distinguishes between animal studies and animality studies, in which the former refers to contexts that are interested in and 'explicitly concerned about the living conditions of nonhuman animals'.[33] Animality studies differs because it focuses on works where animal characteristics are relevant without explicit animal advocacy aims, yet it is interested in how humans think of animals.[34]

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[31] Marion W. Copeland, "Literary Animal Studies in 2012: Where We Are, Where We Are Going," *Anthrozöos* 25, no. 1 (2012), 91.
[32] Cary Wolfe, "Human, All Too Human: 'Animal Studies' and the Humanities," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009), 564.
[33] Michael Lundblad, "From Animal to Animality Studies," *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009), 497.
[34] Lundblad, "From Animal to Animality Studies," 497.

Nearly a decade later, in the 2017 book *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human,* Lundblad 'call[s] for an end to "animal studies"' as an umbrella term.[35] He argues that it 'has come to include such a wide range of work that can often be at odds with … each other', thereby finding it 'more productive' to distinguish the sub-fields.[36] Instead he proposes three terms, human-animal studies, animality studies, and posthumanism, all with their own aims. The focus of human-animal studies is the one that is closest to my understanding of animal studies, which my approach is based on: 'interactions, co-constructions, and material relationships between human and nonhuman animals or constructions of animals as animals'.[37] It is the animal that is the prime focus of this approach, as opposed to animality studies, which focuses on the 'constructions of humans as animals', where the human is the object of study.[38] The human remains the primary object in posthumanism, which centres around 'binaries like human/machine and human/alien', and 'the deconstruction of the human subject.'[39] Those terms are inadequate in their own ways for the purpose of this thesis, because it is the animal that is in my interest, particularly considering the literary animal as representing its real counterpart. That is why I maintain the term literary animal studies throughout my chapters, because it is simple, unquestionably deals with animals in general, and with animals in literature in particular. Furthermore, it is important to recognise the interdisciplinary nature of animal studies, because the novels discussed in this thesis are not simply literary: they are historical and cultural products that can reveal valuable information about the relationship between humans and animals, about philosophy of animals, of scientific knowledge, and attitudes at the time of publication.

Animal studies scholars Kenneth Shapiro and Marion Copeland suggest three main focuses of literary animal studies: to 'deconstruct reductive, disrespectful ways of presenting nonhuman animals'; to 'evaluate the degree to which the author presents the animal "in itself," both as an experiencing individual and as a species-typical way of living in the world'; and to insist upon considering animals as an 'equal partner' in a human-animal relationship.[40] In summary, literary animal studies considers animal characters as characters with animal agency,

[35] Michael Lundblad, "Introduction: The End of the Animal – Literary and Cultural Animalities," in *Animalities: Literary and Cultural Studies Beyond the Human*, ed. Michael Lundblad (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), 11.
[36] Lundblad, "Introduction," 1, 4.
[37] Lundblad, "Introduction," 3.
[38] Lundblad, "Introduction," 3.
[39] Lundblad, "Introduction," 3.
[40] Kenneth Shapiro and Marion W. Copeland, "Toward a Critical Theory of Animal Issues in Fiction," *Society & Animals* 13, no. 4 (2005), 345.

and looks at the way the animal is represented in comparison with its real life counterpart. Copeland further adds that 'a far-reaching goal of literary animal studies is to demonstrate how the animality of the animal matters' in contemporary debates such as ethics and politics.[41] Literary animal studies is attempting to advocate a more moral and ethical approach to animals in the world, to challenge the attitude that humans are superior, and to create a feeling of respect towards beings that are different.

**Why the Horse?**

The primary texts used in this thesis are based on their related style of narration: the first-person perspective of a horse. Sewell's *Black Beauty* is the oldest book (1877), and a famous milestone in literature about animals, particularly in terms of animal welfare advocacy. Morpurgo's *War Horse* (1982) depicts the use of horses in WWI, and has become more popular in the recent decade. These stories add new perspectives to historical periods and events that may not have been contemplated from a nonhuman viewpoint before. The two protagonists Black Beauty (henceforth referred to as Beauty) and Joey (from *War Horse*) are both animal characters with their own agency, explicitly promoting better animal welfare in terms of suggesting how a horse should be cared for in the best possible way. As such, they are good narrators for promoting an improved attitude towards nonhuman beings.

In terms of animals as objects of enquiry, they have 'only in rarified ways' been 'the focal point of systematic literary study.'[42] I aim to challenge this by considering the significance of the equine narrators to the texts, and how these literary animals promote animal welfare. The literary horses are seen as animals in their own right, focusing on the role of literature in the progression of animal welfare and human attitudes towards nonhuman beings. Animal narratives representing their real-life equivalents (with slight variation and fiction, but ultimately as animal characters acting like their typical respective species would) are as important as other types of literature about groups that have been marginalised in literature, such as women and non-white ethnic groups. To imagine such narratives broadens our minds and has the potential to increase our capacity of empathy for others, not only humans, but also species different than our own.

More than a century separates the publication of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse.* The two books are mainly connected through their narration, and the former provides the most examples,

[41] Copeland, "Literary Animal Studies in 2012," 98.
[42] McHugh, *Animal Stories,* 8.

as it is more urgent in its welfare message than the latter. *War Horse* is set during WWI, but was written and published in the 1980s, so its topic matter is not contemporary with publication, though its importance in educating those who are ignorant of the animal effort in war is evident. It is interesting to note similarities between the two, how they both raise awareness of equine life under human influence. Both equine characters move from one human handler and the next, demonstrating differences in horse knowledge and the disparity between good and bad people. *Black Beauty* was an inspiration to *War Horse*, which in itself shows that the older novel has had a significant impact in giving a voice to animals, by spawning other similar narratives.

This is an interdisciplinary thesis, covering not only literature, but also history, philosophy, and psychology to a degree. Human treatment of animals is a subject people have been conscious about for centuries, hence why historical and cultural contexts are important to keep in mind. Animal welfare is of no less concern today than it was for Sewell and her contemporaries, on the contrary, but circumstances have changed along with the altered practical use of animals. The horse is the prominent animal in this text, but in the words encouraging better treatment of equines is also the recommendation of more respectful attitudes towards other species. Animals 'do not suffer less because they have no words' and should therefore be considered as creatures with intrinsic value and with rights to live without suffering (Sewell 152).[43]

**Structure**

The first chapter will discuss *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* in their historical contexts, with a focus on their publication and reception. There will be a short summary of historical attitudes to animals, which helps to understand traditional and philosophical approaches to animals. Having established this, I move on to the context around the time of Sewell's writing, before discussing *Black Beauty*'s publication and its following reception. Moving chronologically, I then consider *War Horse* in its respective context. Looking at reviews of the books, one can see how they were received once they were published and what it was about them that struck readers. Whereas Sewell's novel became a great success rather immediately, Morpurgo's *War Horse* did not become a bestseller until stage and movie adaptions were made. He still made an important impact with his original novel, highlighting the otherwise nearly forgotten use of horses and other animals in war.

[43] Anna Sewell, *Black Beauty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 152. Quotations from *Black Beauty* are henceforth cited parenthetically in the text.

The second chapter will focus on the most striking literary quality of the novels: the first-person narration. The equine narrators will be explored in terms of how they influence the reading of the texts. Narratological theory from Mieke Bal and the theory of defamiliarisation from formalist Viktor Shklovsky will be applied to the texts, which will give an understanding of how the narratives are created, and what literary traits they offer. Bal's focalisation device allows the horse's individuality and subjectivity to shape the text, and Shklovsky's defamiliarisation, dependent on viewpoint, offers a new outlook on something that is otherwise familiar, so as to criticise common behaviour and attitudes. The aim is to show how the horse narrators are literary accomplishments and innovative in the struggle for animals to be treated better. Despite the issue of human bias, animal narrators are necessary in order to see ourselves in a different light, and to be able to scrutinise how human actions impact animals.

The third and final chapter bases itself on the role of imagination and empathy in the texts. Empathy will be an important term in this chapter, as advocacy of other human beings and animals depends on empathy. Here I will mainly refer to the works of philosopher Martha Nussbaum and literary critic Suzanne Keen, who are both interested in the imaginative and empathetic role of literature, and whether or not novel reading has a significant impact on an individual's fellow-feeling. An overview of cognitive studies as applied to literature will be given, in order to show how science and literature can be combined. In the theoretical discussion, I apply Keen's theory of strategic empathy to the two novels, demonstrating that the texts construct empathy for various characters through the use of specific vocabulary.

The chapters will come together in a short conclusion, where I give a summary of the thesis, with the overall goal of advocating literature with animal narrators and animal characters that represent themselves, and for animals to be understood as subjects of inherent value. I aim to contribute to academic conversations within animal studies with my thesis, with the hope of drawing attention to the importance of imagining another species' perspective.

## Chapter 1: History, Reception, and Genre of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*

'[A]nimals, having neither speech nor reason like men, must look to them for protection.'

George Thorndike Angell (1873)[1]

What is the correlation between literature and animal welfare? This is a question that will be considered in this first chapter, placing Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) and Morpurgo's *War Horse* (1982) in their historical contexts and pinpointing textual functions in terms of reader response and cultural impact. The books demonstrate various types of relationships between humans and animals, condemning the relationships that are exploitative and abusive of the animal. Both literary texts were important in increasing awareness of horse welfare in contemporary publication contexts, and today they are acknowledging and informing about past abuse. Through an approach rooted in animal studies I will demonstrate the literary accomplishments of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* as carrying progressive messages of animal welfare, back when they were published as well as today. This chapter will also have a reception approach where the relationship between the author, the text, and the audience is in focus. Studying reception is a way to determine whether the texts had practical influence after their publication. Influence such as the attempt to make people behave more gently towards animals may be found, but this depends on the response of the reader.

Firstly, I will give a short history of attitudes to animals, which aims to give a summary of how people have thought about animals up until Sewell's time of writing. This is to get an understanding of the philosophical and moral viewpoints on animals at the time. Then this chapter will consider the publication and reception history of the two novels in a chronological order. Reception history may be able to tell us about the practical impact of the novels on culture, if readers took Sewell's lessons to heart, and if they learned something new from Morpurgo about the contribution of animals during WWI. Sewell's literary contribution led to a more critical outlook on the use of the horse during the Victorian era, whereas Morpurgo may have been the one to properly highlight the role of the horse during the war. These examples provide horses with a voice to speak out against their negative treatment, made possible by human advocacy.

[1] George T. Angell, "What is Overloading a Horse, and How Proved?" (1873), in *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 178.

Following the sections on history and reception, there will be a reflection of the novels and their associated genre, children's literature. As discussed in the Introduction, literary animals are most often found in children's literature, and the two horse protagonists are not exceptional in that respect. The genre may have contributed to their continued popularity and survival through decades, and I will give a few reasons why that might be so. From a discussion of genre, the chapter will move on to a short overview of the novels today and their continuing significance as horse welfare advocates. The chapter will conclude with a summary.

**Brief History of Attitudes to Animals**

General attitudes towards animals were greatly determined by Christianity, particularly by twelfth-century Catholic theologian Thomas Aquinas and his influential argument that animal cruelty should not be practiced because it could lead to cruelty to humans.[2] Animals were not constantly abused, but cared for only so far as it was in an owners interest. In a discussion of human dominion on Earth in relation to the welfare of animals, philosopher Peter Singer suggests that not much changed, much less improved, after Aquinas: the Renaissance focused on the human as the centre of the universe, and seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes' understanding of animals as machines, without souls or consciousness, led to widespread use of vivisection.[3] Aquinas' argument appears again more specifically in Immanuel Kant's philosophy, which highlights that animal cruelty has a negative effect on one's morality.[4] If someone treats an animal badly it may demonstrate the behaviour of this person towards other people, which is why kind treatment was encouraged: not for the animal's sake, but for the human's. According to historian Harriet Ritvo, eighteenth-century moralists were concerned with children who tortured small domestic animals, precisely because it could mean that the child would turn out to be an undesired deviant in an otherwise sophisticated society.[5] To prevent this, natural history was seen as a way to make sure that children were taught the order of creation and to respect the creatures of God.[6]

Though Christianity still had a strong cultural influence at the time, the eighteenth-century Enlightenment laid the foundations for modern ways of thinking about nonhuman beings, and changes were made slowly. This awareness came along with the progressive ideas of the era, a time when thoughts of human rights were formulated as well. The progressive

[2] Peter Singer, *Animal Liberation* (London: The Bodley Head, 2015), 195-96.
[3] Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 200-1.
[4] Peder Anker, "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes," *Philosophy & Geography* 7, no. 2 (2004), 260.
[5] Ritvo, "Learning from Animals," 77-78.
[6] Ritvo, "Learning from Animals," 77.

thinkers Thomas Paine and Mary Wollstonecraft argued that the human 'intrinsic capability to reason' was the foundation for which a man should be granted rights.[7] This thought process was further extended by Wollstonecraft to include women. Once societies adopt the idea that every individual human has inherent rights, the ideas of rights can be extended and applied to animals through the notion of feeling. Rights for anyone were initially considered absurd, as evidenced by Thomas Taylor's satirical pamphlet *Vindication of the Rights of Brutes* (1792), which mocked the arguments of rights by suggesting the extension of rights of man leading to those of women and then to those of animals, which was thought to invalidate the concept of rights in the first place.[8] Taylor was an aristocrat who felt threatened by the rise of the middle classes. Seen from his privileged upper-class perspective his fear is understandable, but he refused to acknowledge that times were changing and attempted to halt it because it threatened the established hierarchy that he himself was prospering from. Not only did humans threaten his privileges, but animals too.

While it would take more than a century and a half until animal rights were seriously considered, issues of treatment of animals were increasingly important as abuse became more overt. This concern grew bigger through the nineteenth century, particularly along with the increasing number of horses in London, other large cities, and towns. In a survey of the economics of horses in Victorian London, Ralph Turvey points to an estimate of 11,000 horses in the first decades of 1800s, then doubling through the first half of the century.[9] By the end of it, the total number of horses in London is estimated to have been between 70,000 and 150,000 horses, though the statistics are uncertain. By comparing tax sheets for horses, Turvey demonstrates numbers such as a total of 53,923 horses in the city in 1854, to 76,578 in 1864, to 71,903 in 1870 (the latter of which is ambiguous as to inclusion of cab and bus horses).[10] In 1893, author William Gordon suggests in his book *The Horse-World of London* that there were 300,000 horses in the capital. Going through numbers in detail throughout his chapters, the first half of his calculations of the different horse and carriage types seems feasible, stating that 'with the first-hand ponies and hackneys our herd reaches 150,000'.[11] Then he somehow concludes with the rest of the number by saying he 'confirm[s] the usual estimate that half the London

[7] Anker, "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes," 259.
[8] Anker, "A Vindication of the Rights of Brutes," 259-60.
[9] Ralph Turvey, "Horse Traction in Victorian London," *The Journal of Transport History* 26, no. 2 (2005), 57.
[10] Ralph Turvey, "Horse Traction in Victorian London," 48-49.
[11] William John Gordon, *The Horse-World of London* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1893), 164.

horses are at least second-hand'. In relation to Turvey's review, the total number of horses is more likely to be closer to 150,000 than the double.

This increase in the number of horses is due to a simultaneous growth in number of people and goods that needed transport. The development, however, does not mean that all men and women had sufficient knowledge about equines in order to own, ride, or drive one. A horse was often regarded as 'no different from any inanimate piece of capital equipment … and was treated accordingly', resulting in regular overwork, overloading of goods, beatings, lameness, etc.[12] The abuse of horses was hard to ignore in the early decades of nineteenth century, and in 1821 member of the Parliament of Galway Richard Martin proposed a law to protect horses.[13] This proposal passed as law in the following year, 'Martin's Act', prohibiting abuse of selected domestic animals like working horses and cattle. 'Pease's Act' was passed in 1835, extending protection to other animals such as dogs, and demanded better conditions for animals in slaughter houses.[14] The first charity for animal welfare was established in 1824, The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, and gained royal patronage in 1837, going from the initialism SPCA to RSPCA, as it is known as today.[15] This was a Society that originated to protect animals, and relied on people witnessing and reporting cases of maltreatment. It is this kind of context Sewell grew up in and witnessed in the course of her life in southern England. Laws did not lead to immediate change in attitudes though, and *Black Beauty* is evidence that something else was needed to make people understand the seriousness of animal abuse. Horses in particular needed voices that could speak on their behalf, otherwise they would be continuously treated as steam engines without getting the rest, food, and companionship they needed. This is part of what makes the novel such an important piece of literature in relation to animal welfare, and today it is a creative history lesson about the equine situation of the Victorian era.

### ***Black Beauty:*** **Context, Publication, and Reception**

When it first appeared in 1877, *Black Beauty*'s initial reception was one of silence, according to biographer Susan Chitty, as the publisher Jarrold and Sons had low expectations.[16] They

[12] Turvey, "Horse Traction in Victorian London," 41.
[13] Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 204.
[14] "Our History," RSPCA, accessed January 26, 2019, https://www.rspca.org.uk/whatwedo/whoweare/history.
[15] "Our History," RSPCA.
[16] Susan Chitty, *Anna Sewell: The Woman Who Wrote* Black Beauty (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2007), 206.

were soon corrected when, thanks to advertising and lobbying, the book was bought in larger numbers, selling approximately 90,000 copies by 1890.[17] The editions lined up as the sales figures rose: in the following August 1878 the newspaper *Norfolk News* announced that the fifth edition of the book was 'now ready'.[18] The same article gave a recommendation of the book from 'a well-known Farmer in Norfolk', who was of the opinion that the book 'ought to be in every family, especially where any dumb [speechless] animals are kept.' Early on, *Black Beauty* was seen as a book of moral consideration for these 'dumb animals' who are in close proximity to humans. Reading the words of a farmer who likely works with animals on a daily basis adds validity to the understanding of the book as a practical work one should have available for consultation.

*Black Beauty* was Sewell's only published book, and as she herself commented in a journal or letter, the book was written with a 'special aim being to induce kindness, sympathy, and an understanding treatment of horses'.[19] She specifies no audience, so we can only presume that she wanted the book to be read by people who had a need for education about horses, which would be anyone who had anything to do with the creatures. Indeed, as *The Lichfield Mercury* newspaper wrote in April 1878, five months after publication of *Black Beauty*, her novel was construed as 'an amusing and instructive volume' that will help 'to diminish that abounding cruelty to horses which so sickens the human heart'.[20] Its accuracy in terms of equine physiology and terminology was noted by readers, as if it was written by 'a veterinary surgeon, by a coachman, by a groom, there is no mistake in the whole of it'.[21] The potential success of her aim to 'induce kindness' relies heavily on reader response to the text, particularly as to whether they will take it seriously or not. An accurate account, as mentioned in the Introduction, of the horse culture would help contemporary readers trust and follow the text and make it easier for them to put Sewell's horse tips into practice.

An 1878 annual report from the RSPCA branch in Dundee, Scotland, gives a good overview of the kinds of abuse that could be inflicted on horses. The Society's statistics show 71 cases of reported animal cruelty in Dundee in that year, of which an overwhelming majority, 65, regards equines in various classifications: 'working horses while suffering from raw sores,

[17] Adrienne. E. Gavin, "Introduction," in *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), xvi.
[18] "Trades, Professions &c.: Fifth edition, now ready," *Norfolk News*, August 10, 1878, 3.
[19] Anna Sewell qtd in Chitty, *Anna Sewell*, 200. The nature of Sewell's comment, whether it is a journal entry or a letter, is uncertain.
[20] "Art and Literary Gossip," *The Lichfield Mercury,* April 5, 1878, 3.
[21] "A Succourer of Many," *Mother's Companion*, January 8, 1892, 7.

37; working horses while suffering from lameness, 19; cruelly flogging or otherwise maltreating horses, 5; starving horses, 4'.[22] This report is a good representation of the different types of horse abuse, though one can imagine the number of reports being higher in London due to the city's larger size. The report gives authority to Sewell and her envisioning of similar cases inflicted on Beauty and his equine friends, something that may convince anyone who is sceptical to the plausibility of a fictional account of a horse's life. The novel may have encouraged witnesses to report any maltreatment they saw, thus contributing to raised awareness and statistics such as the RSPCA Dundee report.

As pointed out above, even though a few laws against animal abuse were in place by the time *Black Beauty* was published, new attitudes were still needed to make sure laws were actually respected. A person signing under the nickname 'Anti-Cruelty' exemplifies this in a notice in the northern-Irish *Belfast Telegraph* in 1882 about the overloading of tramcars causing harm to the working horse.[23] The anonymous author writes:

> Is there an Act of Parliament against cruelty to animals? I always thought there was, and that the overcrowding of public vehicles and of railway carriages came within the same. But I read in the *Telegraph* of the 15th that a borough magistrate (Mr. Duffy) stated in open court that if the Tramcar Company were prosecuted for overcrowding on Easter Monday, he would not punish them.
>
> […] I recollect, about five years ago, a crowded tramcar driving up the hill at the Crescent, and a splendid little mare losing her feet several times in the efforts to get to the top, and as I saw the driver beat her I would have wished to use a whip on him myself. I called the attention of a constable to the overcrowded car, and he agreed with me that it was horrible cruelty to the poor horses, but that he would not interfere.

The writer is pointing out a clear problem with people's attitudes, even with the police who is supposed to act upon such law-breaking. Based on what this person read and witnessed, not much changed in people's attitudes regarding animals since Martin's Act. Perhaps this person is generous in their understanding of the animal welfare laws, whereas others consider an overloaded tramcar as acceptable due to what they may see as the human necessity of reaching a destination with as little inconvenience for themselves as possible. It is particularly

[22] "The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," *The Northern Warder and Bi-Weekly Courier and Argus*, December 13, 1878, 2.
[23] "Cruelty to Animals," *Belfast Telegraph*, February 18, 1882, n. pag.

problematic when the person in power, such as the magistrate, has interests in the prosecuted party, because it makes laws redundant if they are not enforced. At this point in the 1880s, then, there was still a significant lack of moral consideration for animals, but Beauty's fictional account of equine life certainly made an impact, earning people's compassion, even across the Atlantic.

The novel became very popular in the United States where it was published without copyright in 1890 by George Angell, the president of the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals.[24] Angell promoted *Black Beauty* as 'The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse', associating it with the popular slave narrative by Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852).[25] Sewell's black-coloured protagonist and the details of him growing up, nick-named Darkie, and serving a master on a plantation, are all features allowing for such an interpretation of the horse tale analogous to a slave narrative. Angell's insistence on the association drew on recent history for his American readers, as their Civil War raged from 1861 to 1865. It was a hard-fought war for the abolition of slavery, and a topic that was highly emotional for people. The period after it was marked by heightened 'cultural sensibilities,' leading to various reform movements and support for the weakest in society.[26] If people could be as passionate about the prevention of animal cruelty as they had been about abolishing slavery, then Angell's mission bringing about welfare of animals in USA would eventually succeed. He read the book from a practical perspective with the hope of improving the lives of horses and sought to distribute the book to 'drivers of horses', in 'public schools' and place a copy in 'every home in America', as he wrote in the introduction to the first American edition of *Black Beauty.*[27] By reaching as many citizens as possible, everyone could be informed of horse welfare.

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[24] Chitty, *Anna Sewell,* 249.

[25] George T. Angell, "Introductory Chapter: The Uncle Tom's Cabin of the Horse" (1890), in *Black Beauty* by Anna Sewell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 175-6. Scholars have written about the connection between *Black Beauty* and slavery, also with regards to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, notably Moira Ferguson, Robert Dingley, and Peter Stoneley. Ferguson comments on the English empire and its attitude to slaves and the oppressed in general, see Ferguson "Breaking In Englishness: *Black Beauty* and the Politics of Gender, Race, and Class," *Women: A Cultural Review* 5, no. 1 (1994), 34-52.; Dingley discusses the similarities and differences of *Black Beauty* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Dingley, "A Horse of a Different Colour: *Black Beauty* and the Pressures of Indebtedness," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 25, no. 2 (1997), 241-51.; Stoneley compares the books in a study of black male bodies and links to desire and sexuality, see Stoneley, "Sentimental Emasculations: *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Black Beauty*," *Nineteenth Century Literature* 53, no. 1 (1999), 53-72.

[26] Barbara Hardy Beierl, "The Sympathetic Imagination and the Human-Animal Bond: Fostering Empathy through Reading Imaginative Literature," *Anthrozoös* 21, no. 3 (2008), 214.

[27] Angell, "Introductory Chapter," 176.

*Black Beauty*'s slave narrative association interested people in America, because within two years of publication there, a million copies were in circulation.[28] Many of these, however, were given away to drivers and horse handlers. This suggests that Angell's aim was not for money, but for the distribution of information about humane conduct towards nonhuman animals, not prevented by money to reach those in need of it. Indeed, *The Lichfield Mercury* had an early hypothesis that the book would be very influential, especially if it was 'widely distributed by some rich and benevolent lady or gentleman' to people who dealt with horses, like 'drivers, grooms, and ostlers'.[29] If the book had been particularly expensive it would have been restricted to the higher social classes of people who had excess money to spare, which would have prevented the influence of the text upon many of those who needed the information the most, those usually caring for horses on a daily basis. In 1899 England's *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* wrote a notice that *Black Beauty* had reached the 'sixpenny honours' after being 'sold by the million'.[30] It was now more readily available to all social classes.

The novel's influence was noted across space and time. In an article published a day later than *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* mentioned above, *Belfast News-Letter* applauds *Black Beauty* for its significance in making readers aware of how horses are treated: 'It may also be mentioned that by the R.S.P.C.A. and other humane societies it [*Black Beauty*] has been unanimously acknowledged as one of the most powerful factors in recent years in promoting humanity and kindness to dumb creatures.'[31] This quotation suggests that the novel affected the public consciousness about the treatment of the noble animal that transports all their people and goods over an extensive geographical area. Additionally, *Black Beauty* was popular even decades after its initial publication. By the end of nineteenth century, more than twenty years after publication, forty-seven editions of the novel had been published.[32] There were also several European translations of the novel at this point, including German, Italian, and French.[33] France, like England, had a large population of horses: Paris had 80,000 equines in 1880, confirming that the book's teachings would be practically applicable wherever there were horses in the service of humans.[34] By 1910, the book was selling 250,000 copies every year in

[28] Chitty, *Anna Sewell,* 245-6.
[29] "Art and Literary Gossip," *The Lichfield Mercury,* April 5, 1878, 3.
[30] "Literary Notes," *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, May 31, 1899, n. pag.
[31] "New Books and Magazines: The Sixpenny Novel," *Belfast News-Letter*, June 1, 1899, 6.
[32] "Daily Gossip," *The Bradford Daily Telegraph,* March 16, 1899, 2.
[33] "Reviews of Books," *Western Mail,* June 2, 1899, 7.; "Literary Notes," *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, May 31, 1899, n. pag.
[34] Ghislaine Bouchet, *Le Cheval a Paris de 1850 à 1914* (Geneva: Droz, 1993), 45.

America.[35] This implies that it was relevant and entertaining to many who would listen to Beauty's voice, as the age of the horse was not yet over. Horses and other animals proved crucial to WWI four years later, as *War Horse* teaches us.

*Black Beauty*'s most practical impact was on the use of the bearing-rein, the device the chestnut mare Ginger hates most of all: reins holding the carriage horse's head firmly for a noble look but restricts movement. Professor of Literature Adrienne Gavin states that contrary to common belief, the rein was not abolished, but the use of it decreased towards the end of the century, partly due to Sewell's strong arguments against it.[36] Through Ginger's description of what it is like to wear a bearing-rein, the text challenges the reader's imagination outright:

> fancy now yourself, if you tossed your head up high and were obliged to hold it there, and that for hours together, not able to move it at all, except with a jerk still higher, your neck aching till you did not know how to bear it (Sewell 29).

One should be able to visualise, if not even attempt such a position oneself, to experience the stiffness of one's neck if held in such a position for any length of time. Note the use of the personal pronouns here, appealing unquestionably directly to each individual reader, daring them to oppose her plea to stop using the rein that is so painful. *The Birmingham Post* reports in 1890 an instance that halted the use of a bearing-rein as a direct result of *Black Beauty*. A young girl read the novel and subsequently refused to ride in her family's carriage until her father stopped using the rein.[37] The report comments that it was the imagined 'cruelty of the rein' that had such an impact on the girl and made her act. The bearing-rein was a particular problem that was plain to see in real life to the contemporary reader, and therefore possible to do something about.

Sewell is not forgotten in the twenty-first century, as her book is part of scholarship of literary students as well as enjoyed by general readers. 2017 marked a hundred and forty years since *Black Beauty*'s publication, and journalist Troy Lennon praises it for its pioneering style of animal narration: 'authors before Sewell had written animal characters, but most featured animals doing human things. Sewell's Beauty, while it displays human emotions, was still a

[35] Chitty, *Anna Sewell,* 246.
[36] Gavin, "Introduction," xxvi. For illustrations of the bearing-rein in use, see the Appendix, 182.
[37] E. P. Gibbs, "The Bearing-Rein (Letter to the Editor)," *The Birmingham Post*, October 12, 1890, reprinted in *The Birmingham Post*, October 12, 1940, under the headline "Fifty Years Ago Today", 4.

horse, doing the things horses normally do.'[38] Rarely had the animals represented their real equivalents before Sewell wrote about a horse experiencing life as an equid, but placed in a human environment where he is deprived of many things a horse should have, such as freedom to move. Her style spawned other such books with prominent horse characters, such as Mark Twain's *A Horse's Tale* (1907), Elyne Mitchell's *The Silver Brumby* (1958), Richard Adams' *Traveller* (1988), and John Hawkes' *Sweet William: A Memoir of Old Horse* (1994) besides *War Horse.*[39] These are all books that have horse narrators and offer new perspectives in literature, inspired by Sewell and her little but successful book.

### *War Horse:* Context, Publication, and Reception

The early twentieth century marks the transition period from horsepower to automatic power. This is emphasised in *War Horse* when Joey is faced with 'a grating, roaring sound' of the 'great grey lumbering monster' that is the tank, symbolising the start of technological warfare and the dawn of a new era (Morpurgo 119).[40] Through the entire century most animal species slowly disappeared from people's view in the wake of urbanisation. Yet, as would become apparent especially after Second World War (WWII), the institutionalisation of farming and experimentation on animal species became a cultural issue in many parts of the world. Animal welfare concerns became more prominent and people spoke louder about it. The 1970s and '80s saw the resurgence of cultural awareness in favour of extensive moral consideration of animals, the most important contribution belonging to philosopher Peter Singer and his *Animal Liberation* (1975). In the book he draws attention to the widespread and unethical use of animals for experimental purposes and in industrial farming. Singer highlights the word 'speciecism', defined as 'a prejudice or attitude of bias in favour of the interests of members of one's own species and against those of members of other species', as a way to introduce his arguments based on reason that animals too are victims of systematic discrimination based on what is construed as their lesser intelligence compared to ours.[41] Philosopher Tom Regan is another name to mention, as his book *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983) argues in favour the rights of animals. Around the same time, organisations for the protection of animals were

[38] Troy Lennon, "Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* published 140 years ago today," *The Daily Telegraph*, November 23, 2017, https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/anna-sewells-black-beauty-published-140-years-ago-today/news-story/bab92ec54e46013225ad31e350d8bb8d?nk=75c88e37e17b32c7e5b843a74e3d04bd-1544438704.
[39] Lennon, "Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* published 140 years ago today."
[40] Michael Morpurgo, *War Horse* (London: Egmont, 2007), 82. Quotations from *War Horse* are henceforth cited parenthetically in the text.
[41] Singer, *Animal Liberation*, 6.

founded, such as Animal Legal Defense Fund in 1979, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) in 1980, and World Animal Protection in 1981, undoubtedly influenced by Singer and later Regan.

Placing *War Horse* in this context, it is interesting to note other works of nonfiction published within years of each other, on the topic animals in one way or another. Author Jilly Cooper wrote a nonfiction book titled *Animals in War* (1983), published a year after *War Horse*. The book not only talks about horses in WWI, but of dogs, cats, pigeons, and camels, species that were used for tasks such as transport of goods, people, and messages throughout the conflict. In her 'Author's Note', Cooper mentions a text that was her inspiration, John M. Brereton's *The Horse in War* (1976), which came out only a few years prior to Morpurgo's.[42] Animal studies as a field also grew in these decades, and previously mentioned professor Allen published the 'earliest book-length study' about literary animals in 1983, *Animals in American Literature,* a year later than Morpurgo and the same year as Cooper.[43] There is a correlation between the publication years and topics here, not only in the history of WWI, but with animals as subjects in general.

Surveying literature throughout the twentieth century, there is a notable shift in attitudes towards topics, such as war. Children's books about war written in the first few decades reflect the political mentality at the time, as it was normal to read about 'brave soldiers, Belgian orphans, loyalty to King and country'.[44] It was an us-versus-them mentality and blaming the Germans for WWI was expected. Literature slowly changed through the century, now showing that all sides suffered during the war, something *War Horse* demonstrates. The book does not assign blame like the early war stories did, but it focuses on the loss of all that is touched by war. It is not a practically minded novel in the same way *Black Beauty* is. While Sewell wrote to her contemporaries directly about what was then a current issue of restricting the cab horses' movement and lack of rest, Morpurgo wrote to an audience about the past, something readers cannot change directly. Even though readers cannot go back in time to help the war horses in their suffering, readers can make sure that the efforts of animals during wars are not forgotten but commemorated in a way that may induce respect for the animals living today.

In Maggie Fergusson's biography of Morpurgo, he explains that there were two instances that helped inspire and shape the story of *War Horse.*[45] The first was an instance of

[42] Jilly Cooper, *Animals in War* (London: Corgi, 2000), Kindle, 9.
[43] McHugh, *Animal Stories,* 222, footnote 13.
[44] Rosemary Ross Johnson and Lissa Paul, "Approaching War: Australian and Canadian Children's Culture and the First World War," *Childhood in the Past: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014), 8.
[45] Maggie Fergusson, *Michael Morpurgo: War Child to War Horse* (London: Fourth Estate, 2013), 196.

conversation with a WWI veteran who had found comfort with the horses when he was on the Western Front. Morpurgo is generally interested in war and it recurs as a theme in his books. The second occasion was the witnessing of a boy with a bad stutter suddenly talking without hesitation to Morpurgo's horse Hebe. Once the author became properly acquainted with the horse he and his family bought, Morpurgo learned that horses are sentient and emotive creatures. He wanted to write his story in a way that showed the various sides of the war, but confessed it was difficult to do so with a human protagonist, and an animal one proved better for that purpose: he simply 'needed to feel convinced that there could be real empathy between horses and humans', and the evidence was found with the stuttering boy and the mare. This connection between the boy and the horse was what drove Morpurgo to write the book, with the hope of capturing the gentleness and understanding the horse seemed to have for the stuttering boy, as the horse stood quiet as if listening and comforting.

The publication of *War Horse* was not without its obstacles: it was rejected by various publishers, and once it was published its reception and sales figures was modest, particularly compared to *Black Beauty*'s.[46] Previously mentioned author Cooper reviewed *War Horse* in 1983 in *The Times Literary Supplement,* commenting that though it is inspired by *Black Beauty*, it is 'moving, sparely and beautifully written and well researched'.[47] This comes from someone who researched and wrote nonfiction about the same topic, which gives authority to Morpurgo's fiction. In the article she reviews other books about horses as well but announces *War Horse* as the best book in the selection because of its unique narration and story among other repetitive pony club books. It was also one of the books selected for the Whitbread Award in 1982, which confirms that it has literary value, though it did not win.[48] Journalist Regina Marler, reviewing *War Horse* in 2010, comments that the 'first-person animal narrator asks a lot of the reader', but in return it 'amplifies the emotional impact of the story', which is what makes the story an important one in the discourse of literature and animal welfare.[49]

Journalist Kate Kellaway writing for *The Guardian* in 2012 writes that *War Horse* is a book that is 'short, accomplished and moving, but barely acknowledged until, in 2007, it was

[46] Fergusson, *Michael Morpurgo*, 197.
[47] Jilly Cooper, "Snaffles and sweat rugs," *The Times Literary Supplement*, September 30, 1983, 1055, https://archive.org/stream/TheTimesLiterarySupplement1983UKEnglish/Sep%2030%201983%2C%20The%20Times%20Literary%20Supplement%2C%20%234200%2C%20UK%20%28en%29#page/n11/mode/2up.
[48] Jerome Taylor, "Europe's finest join up for *War Horse*," *The Independent,* June 19, 2010, https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/news/europes-finest-join-up-for-war-horse-2004779.html. The Whitbread Award became what is today known as Costa Book Awards.
[49] Regina Marler, "In the Trenches: *War Horse*," *The New York Times*, September 8, 2010, https://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/12/books/review/Marler2-t-2.html.

turned into a play', which became successful and it is still staged today.[50] Once the story became more popular and known in its form on stage, the original book naturally became an object of interest, making *War Horse* 'a must-read classic, a global hit' on par with *Black Beauty*, according to Kellaway.[51] A few years later, the book was represented in at least two museum exhibitions. One of the exhibitions was at the National Army Museum in London in 2011, directly inspired by the novel.[52] The other, titled *Once Upon a Wartime: Classic War Stories for Children,* appeared at the Imperial War Museum in London in 2011, and at the Manchester branch in 2012.[53] These exemplify how *War Horse* influences and educates the public about how 'more horses served in the first world war than in any conflict in history,' and Joey allows people to imagine what it would be like to be one of those horses.[54] Steven Spielberg's movie adaptation premiered soon after the exhibitions in 2011. *War Horse* sold more copies in the two weeks succeeding the movie version than it did in the twenty-five years after it was published in 1982.[55] The movie influenced sales numbers, but as discussed in the next chapter, the screen and stage adaptions are slightly different from the novel, most notably in the narrative technique of how the story is told.

As far as I am aware, there is not much scholarly work on the original novel *War Horse*. Most of the reviews and discussions one comes across when researching *War Horse* are about the adaptations. However, when it is mentioned, for example in the recent nonfiction book *Farewell to the Horse* (2015) by Ulrich Raulff, Morpurgo's novel earns credit for highlighting important information others may not have thought of: 'It's only very recently that literature, most notably Michael Morpurgo's 1982 children's book *War Horse* […] began to recall the achievements and suffering of animals in the war'.[56] From Raulff's statement it seems as if only the human contribution and sacrifice during the war has been honoured, whereas the

[50] Kate Kellaway, "*War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo on the hidden history behind Steven Spielberg's Oscar contender," *The Guardian,* January 8, 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2012/jan/08/war-horse-michael-morpurgo-spielberg.
[51] Kellaway, "*War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo on the hidden history behind Steven Spielberg's Oscar contender."
[52] Maev Kennedy, "War Horse, the exhibition – a parable of our senseless, violent times," *The Guardian,* October 1, 2011, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2011/oct/21/war-horse-army-exhibition.
[53] James Lachno, "A History of *War Horse*," *The Telegraph,* October 18, 2011, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/film/8834852/A-history-of-War-Horse.html. See also this PDF file with information about the exhibition in Manchester: https://www.iwm.org.uk/sites/default/files/public-document/IWM%20North%20exhibition%20sponsorship%20proposal%20OUWT_final.pdf.
[54] Kellaway, "*War Horse* author Michael Morpurgo on the hidden history behind Steven Spielberg's Oscar contender."
[55] Helen Ward, "From the Horse's Mouth," *Times Educational Supplement* 4982 (2012), 34.
[56] Ulrich Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse: The Final Century of Our Relationship,* trans. Ruth Ahmedzai Kemp (London: Penguin, 2018), 106.

animal side has been ignored, up until the publication of *War Horse*. This demonstrates how typical it is for animals to be ignored in society, similar to how literary animals too are dismissed, even though the horse has been central to the development of modern society. In this regard, Morpurgo's book is an important source of information, though fictional, about the use of war horses.

### *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* as Children's Literature

Raulff terms *War Horse* a 'children's book', despite it being about a horrific war where suffering and death takes place throughout the story. *Black Beauty* too contains horrid scenes of physical abuse and distress caused at the hands of humans, yet *The Norwich Mercury* was accurate in predicting already in 1885, eight years after publication, that the novel 'will hold its own for many generations of boys and girls'.[57] Indeed it has: *Black Beauty* is referred to as one of the most successful children's books of all time, and *War Horse* is, along with the majority of his other books, most often associated with a younger audience.[58] The placement of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* in children's literature confirms the fact that most literary animals are found in books meant for children. That leads to the question: why are these two books considered suitable for children?

Children's literature is a genre that grew along with the idea of childhood in the eighteenth century and had a strong grip on the publishing market once publishers realised that children were a profitable audience.[59] Simply defined, the genre includes texts that are thought of as literature for children and adolescents. They are often thought of as books meant to educate young readers, that they are simply written, and naturally didactic. This, however, is a crude generalisation, because it is difficult to define.[60] The genre is divided and aimed at various levels of reading competence, from picture books with a few words for babies, to young adult fiction intended for teenagers.[61] The content matter of such books was made of 'material that adults thought their children would need within an entertaining format that children might be

[57] "Literary Jottings," *The Norwich Mercury*, October 3, 1885, 5.
[58] Gavin, "Introduction," xvii.
[59] Matthew Orville Grenby, "The Origins of Children's Literature," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, eds. Matthew Orville Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 4, 6.
[60] Peter Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, & Children's Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991, 61-62.
[61] Andrea Immel, "Children's Books and Constructions of Childhood," in *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*, eds. Matthew Orville Grenby and Andrea Immel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 22.

supposed to want.'[62] This means that many pieces of literature with animal characters are placed in children's literature because adults believed children would be familiar with creatures thought to be similar to young humans, whereas adults had no need for animal characters because they know that speaking animals are nonsense. The notion of childhood itself is dependent on time and place, and thus ideas about what is a suitable children's book are based on cultural context.[63] This is because a child in the early nineteenth century is different from a child in the twentieth century, as young people who were old enough to work in the Victorian age may have been considered as adults, whereas they would be perceived as children today. *Black Beauty*, for example, was published at a time when children were put to work much sooner than they are in the twenty-first century. Those who read the book in the 1880s may have indeed been children in our contemporary understanding, but they were also someone who would benefit from reading because they may have worked with horses, as trainee blacksmiths or as stablehands, such as *Black Beauty*'s young character Joe Green. This may have influenced the understanding of *Black Beauty* as a children's book, as well as *War Horse*'s Albert, who is also a young boy, taking care of Joey and working on the farm.

Based on the Sewell and Morpurgo's own statements, the books are not written specifically for children. In most studies on *Black Beauty*, scholars note that the novel was not initially intended for children, 'but for adults working with horses', to be viewed as a kind of manual for the handling of horses, and indeed it was for some time.[64] It was read by many young people who were used to horses, and its appeal changed along with society when the horse was no longer used to the same degree as it was when the novel was published and nowadays it is to be found in the children's section of a book shop or library. Morpurgo's book is also found in this section, though he himself does not necessarily intend for his books to be read by children only, stating in an interview that, 'I don't [consciously write for children] … I just write'.[65] He suggests that the reason his books are so often construed as children's literature is because 'they're about children', even in grave contexts like war.[66] They are also stories readers can learn from, and children is the main group in need of education.

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[62] Grenby, "The Origins of Children's Literature," 3.
[63] Immel, "Children's Books and Constructions of Childhood," 19.
[64] Peter Hollindale, "Plain Speaking: *Black Beauty* as a Quaker Text," *Children's Literature* (2000) 98.; Chitty, *Anna Sewell,* 236.
[65] "Michael Morpurgo on War Horse, working with Steven Spielberg, early life and Harry Potter," YouTube video, 30:20, "Chat Life," June 25, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRhuQKzAo-Y.
[66] "Michael Morpurgo on War Horse."

Among literary critics, the genre suffers from the assumptions that it is inferior to other kinds of literature, and is certainly not part of the established literary canon, according to children's literature professor Peter Hunt.[67] Perhaps it is not a coincidence that the two horse novels are placed in children's literature, considering the point that animals are generally overlooked, and just as children are not taken seriously enough. This is slowly changing within the academic sphere, thanks to Hunt and his insistence on the literary merit of books associated with children. It is a genre of culture and history that offers valuable lessons about humans and animals alike. Moreover, it may have contributed to the continued popularity of Beauty and Joey's narratives, who speak on behalf of those who have no voice of their own, including children who are also largely controlled by adults.

In 1932, journalist for *The Essex Newsman* Sylvia Mayfair reports that horse literature was a favourite genre among children at the time.[68] In historical context, cars were quickly taking over as the main form of transport, and many of the issues Sewell wrote about were non-existent, primarily because the horse was no longer used to the same extent as it was during her time and up to the early twentieth century. Mayfair reports that Pony Clubs 'helped to stimulate' children's interest in horses, hence why they might want to read about horses too. Perhaps it was a lingering romantic notion of knights and the use of the noble steeds as transport that sparked this interest. Though it is positive that the horse is not forgotten, it is important that the dark side of the use of the horse is acknowledged. This may be why Cooper reviewed *War Horse* as the most significant of the books she reviews, because it lets the horse comment on various aspects of its relationship with humans, which is different from the numerous pony club books told from the perspective of young boys and girls.

Elements of knowledge and education seems to have played a significant part in the conservation of the two novels. Still on the topic of children and education yet also more suited to a mature audience is the genre called Bildungsroman, its main characteristics contributing to the success of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*. The 'coming-of-age' story is thought of as 'the most important novelistic genre of the nineteenth century', a period that *Black Beauty* was part of.[69] This is a genre that is read by people of all ages. Considering that *Black Beauty* was published in 1877, it is easy to place beside highly acclaimed novels: Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) and Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* (1850) and *Great Expectations* (1861),

[67] Hunt, *Criticism, Theory, & Children's Literature*, 21.
[68] Sylvia Mayfair, "A Woman in London: Riding and Reading," *The Essex Newsman,* August 6, 1932, front page.
[69] Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies*, 179.; Gavin, "Introduction," xxiv.

all of which are also written in first-person narrative *War Horse* can be added to this list of Bildungsromans, thanks to the similar chronology of plot as well as narrative technique. These stories are about respective individuals who tell a story about their lives from childhood to adulthood. As such, they offer a familiar framework of being a story about an individual growing up and earning life-long experiences, but a new and unusual narrator brings something new to the much-loved genre. Bildungsromans highlight the importance of upbringing and the consequences that has in later life: Beauty is an example of a horse with positive upbringing, and his nature is always calm and quiet compared to the rough one of Ginger, who was abused and her behaviour thus reflects her earlier experiences.[70] The genre is an exercise in empathy for others, and particularly for the animals that are represented in the literary texts.

**The Importance of Imagining Perspectives Today**

How a literary animal is represented matters, because it can signify how the author thinks of an animal and proposes mays readers can consider them too. Animal stories like Charles Roberts' may well teach readers about the nature of animals but may at the same time prevent an understanding of animals as individuals: each animal has a distinct personality as well as their species characteristics. In order to change negative attitudes and to see animals as worthy individuals deserving moral consideration, representation and discourse concerning nonhuman beings must change. Literature has an important role in providing perspectives that offer ways of understanding those who are different than us. Literary works contribute thoughts and arguments in favour of better relationship between humans, animals, and nature in general.

Reading *Black Beauty* as an animal welfare novel reacting against the abuse of horses makes us aware of the pressing concerns that Sewell was pointing out to her contemporaries. Some of those concerns are hardly changed today, a clear example being the use of carriage horses in New York City. Journalist Liz Ribbons of *The New York Times* reports that there are about 220 registered carriage horses that are still transporting people around in New York to this day.[71] Ribbons' article is about the controversy of horse carriages in large city, and uses Teddy the horse as a starting point for the discussion, 'If only Teddy could talk.' That would make everything easier, but as Sewell and Angell insisted, humans have to speak for Teddy and his kind. This emphasises the importance of animal narrators when presented realistically. The

[70] Hawthorn, *Studying the Novel*, 149.
[71] Liz Ribbons, "Who Speaks for the Carriage Horses?", *The New York Times*, January 17, 2014, https://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/19/nyregion/who-speaks-for-the-horses-in-battle-over-carriages.html.

modern carriage drivers argue that the horses are given the care they need, and veterinarians 'found no evidence … of inhumane conditions' during their checks in 2010.[72] While that is a relief, horses' circumstances are still not ideal, as they are deprived of the free movement and grazing natural to horses, which is one of the main things Beauty longs for, even in a place where he is otherwise happy. Modern carriage horses have to work in uncompromising environments, with cars going dangerously fast, and a constant noise of traffic and people around them. Carriage horses are unable to graze in a paddock on a daily basis, barring five weeks of holiday the horse is obliged to once a year, and their stalls are about six square meters, which is not much for an adult horse.[73] Another argument by a horse owner, Stephen Malone, is that the horse 'is bred to pull; their main and sole purpose is to pull', which exemplifies the modern, capitalist version of the old-fashioned philosophy that animals exist purely to serve human purposes.[74] If Teddy the horse could narrate like Beauty, he would likely want time to simply be a horse, not a means to a human end. The practice of imagining life from a horse's perspective is crucial if we are to properly consider what a horse might indeed say in such a situation, because consideration should be for the horse's welfare, not humans'.

Other pressing areas of concern for horses today are neglect, racing, and the transportation of horses for slaughter. The number of neglected horses rescued in the UK by organisations like RSPCA and World Horse Welfare is increasing.[75] The reason behind this is often due to what former Trustee of Racing Welfare Christopher Hall calls 'equine illiteracy', ignorance about the nature and welfare of horses.[76] It is relatively cheap and easy to buy a pony or a horse, but owners may not realise how much time and money is required in order for the horse to be well stabled, fed, exercised and have the necessary amount of time spent both in- and outside. Equine cruelty may be a result of a desire for wealth, as racing is still a big sport, and it too is controversial because there is much at stake for big prizes, and many jockeys and others involved in the industry will go to great lengths to win, such as drugging the horse so it can run faster.[77] Perhaps another horse story should be written in order to spread information and knowledge about these issues and how we might change our attitudes to place the welfare of animals higher on the political agenda, just as *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* did.

[72] Ribbons, "Who Speaks for the Carriage Horses?"
[73] Ribbons, "Who Speaks for the Carriage Horses?"
[74] Ribbons, "Who Speaks for the Carriage Horses?"
[75] Christopher Hall, *Horse Welfare, Use Not Abuse* (Dunbeath: Whittles Publishing, 2015), 72-73.
[76] Hall, *Horse Welfare*, 84.
[77] Hall, *Horse Welfare*, 20, 22.

**Conclusion**

After summarising the various philosophical perspectives on animals in history, this chapter contextualised *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* in history, highlighting some of the reception they received by their audiences once they were published, as well as considering the possible effect of the novels on readers' attitudes and knowledge about horses. Traditional attitudes towards animals as soulless machines is difficult to change, though an increased awareness of animal suffering during the nineteenth century slowly made a difference in the form of laws and charity organisations working to prevent cruelty and abuse. A newfound interest in animals and the equine war effort in the 1970s onwards also contributed to a new way of perceiving animals, to see them as creatures in their own right, with needs to be met in order for them to lead lives with unnecessary suffering.

*Black Beauty* sold in great numbers after its publication and became a prominent text against the use of the bearing-rein, its use dwindling after the literary appeals of Beauty and his friends. Contemporaries in particular saw horses with new eyes and learned to appreciate the work they do for humans despite the flogging and dragging heavy loads wherever they were instructed to go. Sewell wrote about situations her readers could witness in the streets of London, thereby offering cases where readers themselves could be a part of the liberation of pain. The report of a witness of an overloaded cart to a constable is an example of this, as Beauty too was in a similar, though fictional, position of nearly dying from overwork. Though it is labelled as a children's book, it was very much a practical lesson in horse behaviour and welfare.

*Black Beauty* is utilised more than *War Horse* in this chapter, and as pointed out, that is due to its clear welfare advocacy. *War Horse* is more subtle and less urgent, yet Joey's voice is as powerful in speaking for himself as a horse, as literary animal studies wants animal characters to do. Morpurgo's book is slightly different in nature, portraying a past that readers cannot change. They can, however, remember the war effort of the voiceless creatures that 'had no choice' in the conflict.[78] It is a novel that has been told on the page, on stage, and on screen, as well as inspiring and taking part in historical exhibitions in museums, contributing with valuable information about the past that has previously been overlooked. In an animal welfare context, both novels have increased awareness and knowledge of the relationships between humans and horses. They provide examples of positive and negative experiences, giving an understanding of the unfair and immoral treatment that horses are or may be subjected to by

[78] Cooper, *Animals in War,* 18.

humans. The equine voices teach readers about the realistic contexts of Victorian London and WWI, in addition to voicing concerns of animals that have to rely on benevolent humans to protect them from human violence and ignorance. Beauty and Joey are two animal characters that have their own agencies as animals, who in my approach represent no one else but their equine equivalents.

Since their publications, the novels have drifted more firmly into children's literature and are generally associated with a young audience. As Gavin argues in the introduction to *Black Beauty*, its short chapters, didactic language, and Beauty's 'childlike naivety' all contribute to the understanding of this novel as a children's book.[79] The same could be said for *War Horse*, a story by children's laureate Morpurgo. They were not originally meant for children, but it is a good thing if children read about the horses and learn to be respectful towards them and other animals from an early age. It is good for young readers, and indeed for adults, to learn that animals feel pain and want to live as best they can, and it is the horse narratives and the textual technique named defamiliarisation that allow readers to imagine the animal perspectives, which will be the topic of the next chapter.

[79] Gavin, "Introduction," xxi.

## Chapter 2: 'From the Horse's Mouth'

'What more could I want? Why, liberty!'

Black Beauty (Sewell 23)

Many, if not the majority, of the texts we read over the course of our lives are about human concerns and our subsequent views on the world around us. 'Literature is written by, for, and about people,' writes Mieke Bal, and this is ultimately the case for both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*.[1] Readers learn as much about the human characters as they do the equine ones, as they are all in a society as a whole. Part of the attraction of narrative texts is the collection of recognizable traits readers can identify within characters, but the characters in question do not need to be human: they can be animals.[2] Undeniably, their natures are always mediated through human consciousness and language, because literature is a human creation, and this is therefore a bias that we cannot step away from and must be aware of. However, literature is also a medium where imagination has no boundaries, and where all kinds of perspectives are explored, particularly those we can never experience, like nonhuman animal points of view.

Though there are many literary animals, only a handful are written, in part or wholly, from the perspective of animals, such as Apuleius' *The Golden Ass* (2nd century AD), and Arabella Argus' *The Adventures of a Donkey* (1815), both representing the world as seen through the eyes of a donkey. Another nineteenth-century example is the feline perspective, *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr* by E. T. A. Hoffman (1819, originally published in German). Recent publications include W. Bruce Cameron's *A Dog's Purpose: A Novel for Humans* (2010), Hiro Arikawa's *The Travelling Cat Chronicles* (2012), and Susanna Tamaro's *The Tiger and the Acrobat* (2018). It is debatable whether an author consciously writes with the intention of making readers aware of the relationship between humans and animals, as the animal character may only be employed for allegorical purposes, such as in George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945). Furthermore, an animal itself cannot be presented in an objective way, because it is replaced by human interpretation and translation of the real animal into a literary animal who communicates through the human language, which in the context of this thesis is English. Unlike other equally overlooked groups in society, animals can never criticise or

[1] Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative*, trans. Christine van Boheemen, 4th ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 105.
[2] Bal, *Narratology*, 105.

suggest changes to their image, as humans will always have the power to portray animals according to a specific ideology, or with political agenda.

In this chapter, my objective is to analyse *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* as examples of what I refer to as 'horse narratives': stories told from the perspective of one or several horses, be it in first-person, third-person, or omniscient narration. Other horse narratives include Tolstoy's 'Kholstomer/Strider', Twain's *A Horse's Tale*, Mitchell's *The Silver Brumby*, and Adams' *Traveller*, as mentioned in the previous chapter. None of these, however, are narrated fully from the horse's perspective, but instead with changing points of view. The analysis in this chapter is focused on how narratives are constructed in the two primary texts, and how the reader is urged to understand life from an equine perspective. Both novels are in the form of first-person narration from the horse's point of view. Drawing on the scholarship of narratologist Mieke Bal and formalist Viktor Shklovsky and employing a theoretical backdrop of animal studies, I will argue that the horse perspective is crucial in the reading of the novels, as it forces a viewpoint that re-evaluates human conduct towards nonhuman beings. Even though humans can never know what it is like to be a horse, imagining a perspective other than our own is necessary and beneficial to bring a new angle to our otherwise habitual behaviours in real life. We imagine others' perspectives all the time: a literary human character is also imaginary, it is not real but 'resembles' a person, as is the case in (auto)biographies.[3] Thus it requires near equal effort to imagine a human whose lifestyle diverges from our own as it does to imagine oneself as another species. By seeing ourselves from a new angle, we become aware of the ways in which our conduct may influence the environment, animals, and other humans around us, and we can challenge those attitudes.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part will discuss the narrative style of the two novels using Bal's narratological theory and terminology. The horse narrators are unique because they lead us to step out of our human comfort zone, and into a strange consciousness that challenges the reader to imagine vision, hearing, and sensation in a completely different way. Narratology highlights the importance of the perspectives through which stories are read, and here the notion of the narrator and what is called 'focalisation' will be discussed. Bal's scholarly work on narratology is suitable due to her interest in narrative as a 'cultural mode of expression', as both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* display important features of past and present cultures of attitudes towards animals.[4] Moving from the first to the second

[3] Bal, *Narratology*, 105.
[4] Bal, *Narratology,* xx.

part, I apply Shklovsky's theory of 'defamiliarisation' to the texts, a device partly caused by the narrative effects of the books. This is a device that makes the normal appear unfamiliar, something that is useful when one wants a new perspective on an aspect of life. The purpose of employing these theories is to explore the function of a horse narrative in a literary context, engaging with the unusual perspectives that are constructed and demonstrating how a fictional nonhuman can teach us about our own cultures, simply by making readers imagine life as an animal. These two literary concepts, narratology and defamiliarisation, merge together properly in the third part where I compare the literary functions to a selection of movie and stage adaptions of the two novels, to identify traits that are available only in literary form of the horse narratives.

**Narrative Situation: Narrator and Focaliser**

The question of narrator is one of the most central ones in a narratological analysis, as 'all utterances, and hence all narratives, imply a speaker'.[5] When we read, we are taking in the voice of the one who tells the story, as well as voices of characters that the narrator relates to the reader and allows them to elaborate thoughts and communicate to an audience. In her book *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative,* Bal encourages the reader to 'ask meaningful questions' about what 'is proposed for us to believe or see before us' in a narrative.[6] I ask about and explore the function of an animal narrator. A horse or any other animal will perceive the world from a different perspective than a human, an important aspect to consider in animal studies. According to Mary Allen, there is a general 'assumption that [literary animals] must stand in for something else', suggesting a constant anthropocentric (human-centred) focus within literature.[7] Literary animal studies therefore turn the attention towards a theory of animals and our relationship to them, with the focus of understanding a literary animal as a representation of the animal itself and how it sees the world.[8] As is evident with Beauty and Joey's personalities, they are shaped by their environment when growing up, just as a human is. The stories of the two horses are shaped by how they perceive things and events around them. Perception is thus the primary focus of this chapter.

[5] Bal, *Narratology,* 59.
[6] Bal, *Narratology,* xxi.
[7] Allen, *Animals in American Literature*, 10.
[8] Copeland, "Literary Animal Studies in 2012," 92.

Bal's contribution to the field of narratology is in conversation with other scholars such as Gérard Genette, Seymour Chatman, Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, and Gerald Prince.[9] Bal is perhaps especially known for her 'characteristic' three layers of 'narrative hierarchy': text, story, and fabula, compared to Genette's story and plot.[10] To Bal, the 'text' is fundamentally 'a finite, structured whole composed of signs', which can be further understood as a 'narrative text' where 'an agent or subject' tells 'a story in a medium', this medium being language in this instance.[11] The 'story' is the 'content of that text', whereas the logical and chronological 'events' caused or experienced by 'actors' are elements that make the 'fabula'. These layers can thus be distinguished, though it is important to note that they are dependent on each other. Two texts can be different, but their story is constant: for example, *Black Beauty* is published in several versions, the text can be abridged or unabridged, or adapted for a particular audience, but the story about the horse remains more or less the same. The same principle is relevant to *War Horse*: a novel and a play, same story. The distinction between the story and the fabula 'is based on the difference between the way in which the events are presented and the sequence of events as they occur' in the fabula.[12] This separation is exemplified by the presentation of Joey's life on the Narracott farm, where 'long hard winters and hazy summers' pass after he first arrives (Morpurgo 11). Events of those seasons is only implied, as Joey summarises his life with Albert until the significant day of his departure. These distinctions provide 'a good basis for the study of narrative texts', because they allow us to deconstruct a text and explore how it functions and to see the layers as separate while also intertwined.[13] Such an analysis is aiming to increase our understanding of the chosen novels' significance, both as literary works, and as contributions to culture. This is why I retain these terms in this thesis, with the goal of demonstrating their practical function within the two horse narratives.

What Bal calls the 'narrative situation' of a text is made up of narration and focalisation.[14] The agents of these notions, the narrator and the focaliser, work on separate levels in a hierarchy, hence why she has categories for specific functions: the narrator works in the narrative text, the focaliser 'colours the story with subjectivity'; and the actor works in the

[9] James Phelan, "Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers – and Why It Matters," in *New Perspectives on Narrative Perspective*, ed. Willie van Peer and Seymour Chatman (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001), 53.
[10] W. Bronzwaer, "Mieke Bal's Concept of Focalization: A Critical Note," *Poetics Today* 2, no. 2 (1981), 193; Mieke Bal, "Narration and Focalization," in *Narrative Theory: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies: Volume I*, ed. Mieke Bal (London: Routledge, 2004), 294.
[11] Bal, *Narratology,* 5.
[12] Bal, *Narratology,* 6.
[13] Bal, *Narratology,* 5-6.
[14] Bal, *Narratology,* 12.

fabula.[15] Traditionally the concept of point of view has been confusing in terms of the questions 'who speaks' and 'who sees', commonly thought to be one and the same.[16] The term 'focalisation' was coined by Genette, meaning the one who sees, clarifying confusion, though it may still be a complicated notion to understand when encountering complex narratives.[17] According to Bal, the narrator is the one who tells the story, 'a fictitious spokesman', who may or may not be a character in the story.[18] In relation to the two horse novels, the narrators are Beauty from the eponymous novel, and Joey from *War Horse*. These are the spokespersons in the texts, while they are also found as characters in the story they tell, and actors in their fabula. The narrator is not the only one who 'sees' in the story, though. Bal defines focalisation as 'the relation between the vision and what is seen, perceived.'[19] A focaliser is thus someone who perceives in a specific way depending on position, knowledge, and experience, and the object of the focaliser is referred to as the focalised.[20] The narrator may be the focaliser in cases where the layers overlap, as is the circumstance in the novels since the two protagonists are both 'character-bound narrators', which connects them directly to a specific character in the story.[21]

Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan states that in principle, and specifically in retrospective first-person narratives (a narrative telling of past events, as in *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*) narration and focalisation are separate activities.[22] Seymour Chatman and Gerald Prince argue further that they are two distinct concepts and always detached: the narrator is part of the discourse, the textual level, and thus not a character in the story, whereas the main character is the focaliser and can then perceive whatever is in that story.[23] Applying their arguments to the two novels, we can say that Older Beauty is the narrator, because he is telling about the experiences he has had, thus not taking part in the story. The younger version of himself who is the experiencing character is the focaliser. This distinction is suggested by the present tense when the narrator is alluding to himself in the 'now', the time of his narration, as well as the act of remembering past events, 'The first place that *I can well remember*' (Sewell 9, emphasis added). Past tense signifies the event that happened, "*was* a large pleasant meadow", which gives an impression

[15] Bal, *Narratology,* 7, 12.
[16] Bronzwaer, "Mieke Bal's Concept of Focalization: A Critical Note," 195.
[17] Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies*, 180.; Robert Dale Parker, *How to Interpret Literature: Critical Theory for Literary and Cultural Studies*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 71.
[18] Bal, *Narratology,* 8.
[19] Bal, *Narratology,* 133.
[20] Bal, *Narratology,* 132.
[21] Bal, *Narratology,* 12-13.
[22] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 74.
[23] Phelan, "Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers," 57.

of a temporal distance between the narrator and the focaliser (9). The situation is the same in *War Horse*, as Joey tells a tale about his experiences in war. As such, Bal's statement that in first-person narration 'the hero cannot be identified with the narrator, because the moment of writing one's adventures is never the moment of experiencing them' is applicable here, as there is a difference between the narrator and the focaliser, the hero.[24] These are points in favour of keeping the two concepts distinct from each other.

**The Narrator as Focaliser**

There are, however, arguments in favour of considering narration and focalisation as combined in select instances. James Phelan suggests that while it is useful to distinguish narration and focalisation to understand the difference between them, the distinction 'fails to explain their role in influencing the perceptions of *narratees*, implied audiences, and flesh and blood readers.'[25] Both equine narrators perceive things in very specific ways and their attitude towards features in their story are determined by their experience, hence suggesting that the narrator can indeed be a focaliser: the narrator is similarly subjective in his assessments. I am of the opinion, along with Bal and Phelan, that the focaliser is not restricted to the character within the story but can be found in the narrator on a textual level, due to the naturally subjective view in which narratives are told.[26] Therefore I distinguish the two versions of focalisers as the 'external-' or 'narrator-focaliser', which is Old Beauty and Old Joey, and 'internal-' or 'character-focaliser', which is Young Beauty and Young Joey.[27] An example from *Black Beauty* demonstrates this nicely: 'I was now beginning to grow handsome, my coat had grown fine and soft, and was bright black' (Sewell 14). Here is an external narrator 'I' functioning as the focaliser because he is the one who perceives and describes the object of interest, his younger self, the focalised. The focalised cannot see himself 'grow handsome' or physically see much of his own body, and thus the young character is not the focaliser in this instance.

The ideological difference between a human focaliser and an equine focaliser supports the argument that the narrator may also be the focaliser. Beauty is narrating a story he sees as important to tell, choosing to include significant moments of interaction with both horses and people as a way to demonstrate situations that horses experience. Beauty's observations are

[24] Mieke Bal, *A Mieke Bal Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 5.
[25] Phelan, "Why Narrators Can Be Focalizers," 51, original emphasis.
[26] James Phelan, "Dual Focalization, Retrospective Fictional Autobiography, and the Ethics of *Lolita*," in *Narrative and Consciousness: Literature, Psychology and the Brain,* eds. Gary D. Fireman, Ted E. McVay and Owen J. Flanagan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 138.
[27] Bal, *Narratology,* 143. See also Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction,* 75.

accurate in the sense that the reader will be familiar with practical things associated with horses, such as their handling and use, but the perspective from which it is communicated make the observations new. The narrator demonstrates that perspectives are always subjective. An example from Chapter 3, 'My Breaking In', shows young Beauty training to obediently submit to the gear that is placed and fitted on his body, particularly the bit. A manual from a human point of view, such as the British Horse Society's examination companion, instructs as follows: 'With the thumb and first finger of the left hand, push the bit gently into the horse's mouth while you use your two middle fingers to open its mouth.'[28] The reader is instructed to tease the horse's mouth open for the bit to be placed, suggesting that it is rare for the horse to open its mouth of its own accord. As such, the bit and the bridle come across as simply needed to be able to ride a horse, despite the horse not being necessarily willing itself. Nowhere does the companion give an explanation for the practical use of a bit, other than stating that the right gear should be chosen for horse and rider 'to work safely and in harmony', and that 'all movements' of the human 'should be gentle, while positive control is maintained.'[29] There is little room for consideration of alternatives, as if this is natural law. It would be useful for any rider to know why it is used and the potential discomfort it may cause a horse, because it is still widely utilised in equestrian sports today.

Beauty, who notably narrates in present tense here, having paused his story to explain the procedure of the breaking in of a horse, questions the very object: 'a great piece of cold hard steel … pushed into one's mouth … held fast there by straps over your head, under your throat, round your nose, and under your chin' (Sewell 15). This is a case of a narrator-focaliser, as Beauty the narrator is here giving his interpretation and opinion of the bit, not positive but submissive. The fact that he is telling in present tense suggests that the bridle is something that he has always disliked, and his older self still does, as evidenced by his language, but he has never been able to avoid it. The prominent use of the pronoun 'you' challenges the reader directly to imagine such restraint. The use of adjectives 'cold' and 'hard' and the verb 'push' together gives an impression of the force used when applying the harness, leading the reader to perceive it as negative. His account of the common, and thus recognisable, way to control the horse while riding suggests that it the bridle is an uncomfortable and restraining device, caused by all the straps and the metal.

[28] Maxine Cave, *The Course Companion for BHS Stage One* (London: J. A. Allen 2007), 83.
[29] Cave, *The Course Companion for BHS Stage One*, 80, 82.

Similarly, Joey becomes acquainted with bits as he is ridden and learns that there are degrees of sharpness to the pieces of metal, implying that there are varying forms of human treatment. Once he is in the army and is training to become a cavalry mount, he points out that '[g]one was the gentle snaffle bit that I was so used to, and in its place was an uncomfortable, cumbersome Weymouth that snagged the corners of my mouth and infuriated me beyond belief' (Morpurgo 36). This scene combines the first use of the new bit with a rider with knees like 'a grip of iron', which is uncomfortable for him, suggested by the reference to the hard metal (36). Later, however, when the Corporal is gentler, Joey takes 'the bit more readily', signifying that he has compromised with his rider: when the human behaves more gently, Joey stops fighting the bit (41). If the Corporal had not been as forceful, Joey's first experience with the Weymouth may have been better. This proves that it is possible for humans and horses to work together, as it is not necessarily the gear that is the issue, but the person who utilises it.

For the equine focalisers, the bits are symbols of human exertion of power over nature. Even if the horse could speak and directly say that he disliked the bit, it is humans who have the power to change the conduct towards horses, and thus the stories start and end with important moral implications of the responsibilities that humans have towards those labouring for us. As owners of domestic animals, we have a moral obligation to make sure that the needs of our animals are met, to lessen their suffering that is often a result of human control. Both Sewell and Morpurgo blur the human-animal division, humanising the horses to the extent where it is implied that horses are not different from humans in wanting a content life. The instances of human control of horses in the novel signify the historical dominance humans have over animals, and how animals are sometimes deprived of necessities. Contrary to the thought that trains and early motorised vehicles in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries reduced the use of horses, the need for horsepower reached its peak in the same period.[30] This dominance culminates in WWI, as suggested in *War Horse*, where an estimated eight million horses in total died in the clash of traditional cavalry and modern technology designed to destroy.[31] This appearance of modern technology sometimes results in harsh attitude towards animals, and it is why we need imagined animal perspectives to help us see what we are doing to our fellow beings.

[30] Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse*, 5.
[31] Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse*, 106.

**Choice of Narrator and Focaliser**

Beauty's focalisation provides a balance that is invaluable in the sense that he is not alienating the human readers by generalising and suggesting that all humans are abusive. Beauty comes from a background where he has been treated kindly and this positive experience affects his perception of the situation: he was taught to do his work 'with a good will' even though he finds himself suffering physical pain caused by 'bad and ignorant' human behaviour (Sewell 10, 89). He learns about human endeavours by listening to other horses' stories about their experiences, often much worse than his own. Beauty initially believes the best in the people he meets, and his attitude makes him a good narrator in terms of showing not only the bad sides of human treatment, an example being carter Jakes who 'was flogging … cruelly' (151), but also the positive sides, like Jerry Barker, 'so thoughtful and kind', treating the horse as part of the family (138). Thus, the angle of perception is significant in influencing how the reader may feel towards various characters.

The reader may feel personally closer to the narrator-focaliser who uses the indicator 'I', compared to an omniscient narrative or third-person narrative. Sewell, Morpurgo, and other authors writing from the perspective of animals can choose to write more along the lines of author Charles Roberts' books about animals, which offer objective third person points of view in order to make the animals appear as they would in real natural environments.[32] However, such a story may not gain a general readership's attention in the same way a first-person perspective may, as it is easier to sympathise with an 'I'. A first-person narrator encourages the reader to share their point of view while 'allowing a total penetration into the protagonist's mind', which makes the reader engage more thoroughly than with third person.[33] There is a certain distance between the protagonist and the reader through the use of third person 'he' or 'she', whereas an 'I' is more directly involving the mind of the reader. As literary critic Georges Poulet points out about the mind of the reader, '[i]t is I who think, who contemplate, who am engaged in speaking. In short, it is never a *HE* but an *I.*'[34] This demonstrates that readers are often thinking in terms of themselves as 'I', and thus a first-person narrator like Beauty or Joey have thoughts that resemble the mind of the reader. The literary text merges the narrative 'I' and the reader's 'I': the reader is still aware that the narrator is not himself, but rather that his or her 'I', as Poulet puts it, is 'on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts

[32] Magee, "The Animal Story," 159.
[33] Maria Nikolajeva, "The Identification Fallacy: Perspective and Subjectivity in Children's Literature," in *Telling Children's Stories: Narrative Theory and Children's Literature*, ed. Mike Cadden (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 201, 200.
[34] Georges Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," *New Literary Reading* 1, no. 1 (1969), 56.

within' the reader.[35] Peter Hollindale agrees that one of the founding qualities of *Black Beauty* is its ability to make the reader merge herself with a horse's mind and body.[36] This is what I see as important with the text, as it contains prerequisites for making the reader more compassionate and understanding of those treated unjustly, in the novel as well as those in real life.

Direct discourse is used in Beauty's focalisation to allow other speakers to be heard in the story, thus allowing other focalisers to show their interpretation of events. There is more than one 'I' in the story, and through various levels of narration, the main narrator 'yields the floor' to other speakers.[37] These are generally signified with quotation marks and declarative verbs: 'he snorted … "When I was young I was taken to a place where these cruel things were done"' (35-36). Here we know that the speaker, Sir Oliver, is not the external narrator 'I' Older Beauty, because the speaker is directly communicating with other actors in the fabula, something narrator-focaliser Beauty cannot do. The speaker is not character-focaliser Beauty, because his direct speech is often marked by the pronoun 'I', such as in this instance, '"How dreadful!" I exclaimed', maintaining the character connection between the narrator and the character-focaliser in the story (36).

One of the prominent and memorable voices in *Black Beauty* is in the form of the mare Ginger. Through embedded narrative, a story within the story, the reader is allowed insight into the background of other characters, besides the primary narrator.[38] Ginger tells Beauty, '"I never had any one, horse or man, that was kind to me, or that I cared to please … there was no kind master like yours to look after me, and talk to me, and bring me nice things to eat"' (25). The mare's account, laid out in Chapter 7 'Ginger', and Chapter 8, 'Ginger's Story continued', adds background information to the primary story, because it explains the reasons for the her sour temperament, her distinguishing feature. The text allows her to become a character-bound second-level narrator, as the character-bound first-level narrator, that is Older Beauty, quotes Ginger directly: '"Well", said she, "if I had had your bringing up I might have been as good a temper as you are"' (25). She is drawing on her experience as a young horse, insinuating that early experience determines the nature of an individual as they grow older, as true for horses as it is for humans. Ginger relates that '"the first experience I had of men's kindness, it was all force; they did not give me a chance to know what they wanted"' (26). Here we get the

[35] Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading, 57.
[36] Hollindale, "Plain Speaking," 96.
[37] Bal, *Narratology,* 36.
[38] Bal, *Narratology*, 52.

impression that the humans she was in contact with were impatient and merely forced her to wear tack (bridle, saddle, harness etc.) without giving her time to adapt. Her focalisation offers a more negative perspective of the world than Beauty's, because she is distrustful of humans by default, as opposed to Beauty's comparatively naïve disposition. This naturalises Ginger's response to her treatment, providing the reader with a valid reason for her behaviour, making the reader sympathetic rather than judgemental towards her. After reading the short narrative, the reader may be more inclined to be aware of the treatment of horses, when there is an understanding of cause and effect of equine behaviour.[39] Her position as alternate narrator, compared to Beauty, would result in a different novel entirely, darker and more tragic, culminating in the last stages of her life as a thin and tired mare (131). While the horse narrator may want to criticise those treating horses unjustly, so too must the narrator provide inspiration to the reader. This comes in the form of good people who lead by example, such as John Manly and Jerry Barker.

A notable difference in style of the two horse narratives is the presence of other horse focalisers in *Black Beauty* through direct discourse, whereas these are absent in *War Horse*, where Joey is the only equine mind the reader has access to. In Beauty's autobiography, we get insight into an intricate network of his friends, whose personal stories are quoted by the narrator throughout the various stages of the novel. Once the reader knows about Beauty's experiences, the narrator does not repeat his own stories, in favour of opening up for the other characters to speak, such as in the beginning of Ginger's story: 'she wanted to know all about my bringing up and breaking in, and I told her' (25). This is all he tells the reader of what he told her, before three uninterrupted pages of the mare's story. There are separate chapters dedicated to individual horses: other than Ginger there is Chapter 9 for 'Merrylegs', and Chapter 34 for Captain, 'An Old War Horse'. Additionally, there are shorter conversations with smaller characters throughout the novel. One example is Beauty's curiosity of seeing 'the old brown hunter' Sir Oliver's short tail, and 'ventur[ing] to ask' about the absence of a long tail, his narrative allows the hunter to answer directly, '"I tell you it is a life-long wrong, and a life-long loss"' (22, 35-36). Not only is Sir Oliver answering Beauty, but the reader too, who might wonder the same as Beauty but never had the opportunity to ask about the lack of some horses' tails. Perhaps the reader knows why but have never heard reason from the horse's perspective. The horse narrative of *Black Beauty* is thus rich and offers nuanced perspectives that suggests the individuality of each horse.

[39] Bal, *Narratology*, 54.

*War Horse* lacks the variables of embedded horse voices. Joey is the only reflecting horse, and he simply relays the actions of his equine friends to the reader in free indirect discourse, while quoting humans directly. The other horse characters are not focalisers or given the opportunity to speak out about their individual lives, but part of reported narrating. What is the implication of Joey not quoting or speaking directly to other horses? In one instance, Joey is one of six horses dragging a gun, and is paired with 'a thin, wiry little horse they called Coco' who 'had the nastiest temper of any horse I had ever met' (Morpurgo 99). Joey's focalisation is here limited as he has no further knowledge of why Coco's temper is foul. Ginger's focalisation informs character-focaliser Beauty about the reasons behind her behaviour, to the advantage of Beauty and the reader, in offering an understanding of horses and their behaviour. With Coco, the reader can only guess what made him that way. In one sense, the lack of direct voices may be an attempt to let the horses be more like their real counterparts, where it is unlikely that horses communicate with each other about their past. However, the lack of focalisers also means that a literary opportunity of equine representation like the one found in *Black Beauty* is lost. This is not to say that the older novel exemplifies the best way of representation, because *War Horse* does suggest individual horse personalities through description of body language, rather than spoken conversation. One instance demonstrates Topthorn's kind demeanour, as he 'would lean his great head over the stall and let me rest on his neck' in moments of terror on the boat to France (47). Topthorn says nothing, yet Joey's relationship with him proves that he is a gentle horse. In a way, such description is more authentic in terms of representing horses, because interpreting body language is one of the few ways we can understand animals. Yet, opportunities of representation are lost as well.

A focaliser's descriptions are based on the experiences and observations from a particular angle. Similar to most of Ginger's human handlers, Joey's initial buyer, Mr Narracott, never has the patience to attempt to understand the young colt.[40] The man thinks that the whip will somehow let the horse know what he wants, '[g]ive me trouble and I'll whip you till you bleed' (14). As the story is a selection of prominent memories from Joey and his life, the instances he reports are of importance. In this example, Mr Narracott raises his arm with a whip in it, and Joey, feeling threatened by the movement, turns around and kicks at the man. The reader understands that this is the natural thing to do, both because the narrator has related the

[40] As far as I am aware, Albert's father is never mentioned by first name in the novel, but his name is Ted Narracott in both play and movie: Nick Stafford, War Horse: *based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), iii.; *War Horse.* Directed by Steven Spielberg (Universal City, California: DreamWorks Pictures, 2011), DVD. He is hereby referred to as Mr Narracott.

words of the human to provide background information on what Joey perceives as threatening, and because Joey 'sens[es]' Mr Narracott's intention by reading his body language and subsequently defends himself (14). The direct discourse adds clarity about the intentions of Mr Narracott, which in turn enhances the reader's perception of him as a bad man. Unfortunately, the horse's reaction reinforces Mr Narracott's belief that animals need to be handled with a firm hand due to what he sees as a vicious and deliberately mean act, and he would 'have shot that horse on the spot' had he not been convinced otherwise by his wife (14, 15). The inclusion of his reaction in the novel shows the natural instincts of horses, and they cannot be blamed for defending themselves in situations they consider to be threatening. Humans may not interpret such a context that way, but that is why it is important to have these narratives, for they can convey lessons about traits of animal behaviour that are significantly different to human behaviour.

Morpurgo states in an interview that he is selective in his choice of narrator for his novels, because he 'think[s] it's important to present a balanced' view of the world, to show the variety of voices and perspectives that exist.[41] Parts of the novel are reflected through dialogue between the human characters, conversations and statements quoted by Joey the narrator as a way to give context to the reader. Joey the character-focaliser can hear the humans speaking, but he is unaware of the meaning of the human conversations. This presents the horse as a neutral narrator, listening only and allowing comments from all humans. This becomes particularly important in Joey's context of war, where there is a discourse of 'us versus them' which the horse narrator is allowed to transcend. The focalising aspect is here important because it encourages the reader to consider the war from all sides, not only the British, but the German side as well as the affected French civilians. When Joey is separated from his Trooper Warren and brought to the German side, he relays a tenderness from the Germans, commenting that 'the soldiers gathered around [Joey and Topthorn] … they patted and stroked us' (70). Though Joey comes from the English side of the battle, there is no comment on language when he is present with German or French people. He can understand the Germans when they speak, making no comment on what the language has changed, while suggesting that the Germans are not necessarily worse than the British in this war: '"The world," said the German officer, shaking his head, "has gone quite mad. When noble creatures like these are forced to become beasts of burden, the world has gone quite mad"' (74). Morpurgo enables the horse to transcend

[41] Jo Wadham, "Interview with author Michael Morpurgo," *The National*, February 28, 2011, https://www.thenational.ae/arts-culture/books/interview-with-author-michael-morpurgo-1.420155.

linguistic barriers where all speech is reduced to English, suggesting that animals are not taking sides themselves but utilised by the humans who have them at hand. Because horses cannot understand human language in the first place, this eliminates any difference between English and German: it is the humans' physical actions that count in relation to horses.

Having dissected the horse narrators and focalisers, it is now possible to understand how they function within a text and in influencing the reading of the story. A horse commenting on what is commonly understood as normal human conduct will make a reader pause and reflect, which possible with the concept of defamiliarisation, a theoretical tool that I see as strongly related to focalisation. They are related through their subjective instances: what is familiar to one individual may be alien to another. For instance, the use of the bit when riding horses is familiar to riders, it becomes 'unconsciously automatic' and 'we do not see' that it can cause harm because it is so usual.[42] But it is something else to the horse that is physically affected by it, and this is where defamiliarisation is relevant. The subjective natures of the horse narrators lead to the artistic form that aims to make new experiences by seeing things from a new perspective.

**Defamiliarisation**

Since narration and focalisation are subjective activities, they offer an opinion on a theme or a topic that may be overlooked by others. Through defamiliarisation, the horse narrators allow readers to become reacquainted with things they are otherwise familiar with, but things that will need an extra thought to process what is being presented. Horses are not simply horses in this context, but rather creatures to which readers are reintroduced by considering them as beings that are physically and psychologically different from humans, with distinctive needs and desires. Defamiliarisation as a literary technique was developed by one of the founders of Formalist theory, Viktor Shklovsky, in his 1916 essay 'Art as Technique'.[43] Shklovsky comes from the background of Russian Formalism, concerned with form, structure and language in literary works, though as will be shown, his concept of defamiliarisation is flexible.[44] Defamiliarisation makes readers aware of what literature can represent and of the 'literariness of literary writing'.[45] Shklovsky's essay is a proposition to view art from a new perspective, to fully appreciate its potential and recognise literature's ability to enrich lives, because

[42] Viktor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," trans. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, eds. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 3rd ed. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 9.
[43] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 8.
[44] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature,* 25.
[45] Parker, *How to Interpret Literature*, 63.

> [a]rt exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony.* The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar," to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged.[46]

He argues that habits rob us of nuanced perspectives, leading to automatization, which is destructive to art because readers do not linger to consider the effort that goes into works of literature, and to regain colour, we must defamiliarise contexts around us.[47] It is the process of 'making strange' (from Russian *ostranenie*), defamiliarising people, animals, and things in one's life to see them anew, making the world richer as a result.[48]

A particularly relevant example that Shklovsky uses to illustrate the idea of defamiliarisation is a horse narrative: Leo Tolstoy's 'Kholstomer' (1863/86). The extract selected by Shklovsky is of the horse Kholstomer's focalisation of the concept of ownership, a concept the horse spent a long time thinking about and trying to understand, asking questions like 'What's the meaning of "his own,", "his colt"?'[49] He finds claims to ownership particularly odd and illogical because they do not mean personal interaction with what they call property: 'In due time, having widened the scope of my observations, I satisfied myself that the notion "my," not only has relation to us horses, has no other basis than a narrow human instinct which is called a sense of or right to private property'.[50] As Kholstomer observes, those who own him may not even be personally involved bar the words 'my horse', as there are others who take care of him but are not his legal owners. As human readers, we are familiar with the concept of ownership, as we are surrounded by personal belongings we term as 'mine' or 'yours'. At the same time, the horse's focalisation compels us to consider his position: as a horse, he is not driven by ownership in the same way we are, as horses' lives are driven by deeds. To him, and as readers influenced by his arguments, ownership makes little sense. This example demonstrates a disparity between the animal way and the human way of life. Ownership infringes on an animal welfare in many ways, because a human's right to property often comes

[46] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 9.
[47] Daniel P. Gunn, "Making Art Strange: A Commentary on Defamiliarization," *The Georgia Review* 38, no. 1 (1984), 28.
[48] Eric Naiman, "Shklovsky's Dog and Mulvey's Pleasure: The Secret Life of Defamiliarization," *Comparative Literature* 50, no. 4 (1998), 334.
[49] Leo Tolstoy, "Kholstomer," qtd in "Art as Technique," 10.
[50] Tolstoy, "Kholstomer," qtd in "Art as Technique," 10.

before the welfare of the animal: even though a horse may suffer under the ownership of a person, someone who wants to rescue that horse may be persecuted for transgression or interference with other people's property. As suggested by the historical summary of animal welfare in the previous chapter, it is sometimes difficult for humans to understand the concept of animal rights, as Martin's Act was only passed as the first animal rights bill in Britain because it was phrased in a specific way that appealed to other people's strong sense of ownership and property.[51]

Shklovsky was not the first to theorize about the concept that art serves a purpose to make habits strange: the concept goes as far back as to Aristotle, and prominent Romantics like Percy Shelley and Samuel Coleridge made use of art as a powerful way for poetry to influence the reader.[52] The important difference between them and Shklovsky's concept is that the latter 'saw art as a way to reawaken the mind not only to the beauty of the world, but also to the horrors.'[53] The inclusion of the merciless sides makes his concept particularly useful in relation to the horse novels, as they unveil distressing scenarios that horses were subject to on a daily basis. He believed in the coherence between emotions and cognition, which is interesting in relation to the provocation of strong emotional empathy for the horse characters in the novels, in order for them to practically influence an attitude to horses.[54] By perceiving habits in a new light, it ignites emotion of any kind, as opposed to a dull indifference to automated perception and careless attitudes. Emotion could thus be a force of change: if readers would engage passionately with these horse narratives, they could decide to change their attitude from indifference to kindness and attempt to prevent similar suffering in the future. The opposite could be true; a reader could think of the novels as nonsense, though this still sparks emotion, whether it be annoyance or anger, which in turn could start a new debate. The relationship between the novels and empathy will be discussed further in the next chapter.

As with emotion, defamiliarisation is highly flexible in its application, and the hybridity of *ostranenie* is one of its characteristics. The device can be applied to the world and all its contents, which makes the device 'extraliterary'; or it could be applied to features like language and genre, making it 'intraliterary'.[55] The concept is important in its scrutiny of existing phenomena, practices that may or may not be ethically sound. Literary critic Svetlana Boym

[51] Singer, *Animal Liberation,* 205.
[52] Alexandra Berlina, "Translator's Introduction," in *Viktor Shklovsky: A Reader* by Viktor Shklovsky, trans. and ed. Alexandra Berlina (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 26.
[53] Berlina, "Translator's Introduction," 26.
[54] Berlina, "Translator's Introduction," 26.
[55] Berlina, "Translator's Introduction," 24.

brings Shklovsky into literary theory by using his defamiliarisation technique in relation to Hanna Arendt's writings on politics, demonstrating the possibility of applying the device in varying contexts.[56] Extending the Kholstomer example, it is clear that ownership remains a familiar concept today, but its continued existence does not necessarily mean that it is a good thing, as Kholstomer reminds us. Defamiliarisation allows us to 'reinvent the world, to experience it anew', as I argue that both Sewell and Morpurgo are doing in their novels seen from the unusual perspectives of horses.[57] The use of horses by humans has existed for centuries, but it does not mean that all kinds of treatments are right. By using defamiliarisation in a discourse of ethical treatment of horses, familiar yet immoral treatment is unveiled through the estrangement and highlighting of the habitual attitudes. It is a helpful framework to think about the horse narrative as a device that unsettles the anthropocentric view of the world, making the reader realise how human activity in a society affects our nonhuman companions.

Defamiliarisation is put into practice by obscuring descriptions of familiar things and concepts, or by describing a seemingly normal setting but with elements that make it less familiar, particularly refraining from naming objects or terms, thus withholding overt information for a certain amount of time.[58] Both novels employ this technique in the beginnings with the narrators explaining about their early life. Beauty commences:

> 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.
>
> (Sewell 9)

For the whole first paragraph, the reader is only presented with a first-person narrator whose identity is unknown and could potentially be anyone. There are clues that help us identify traits that seem crucial to pinpoint the speaker: the person is subservient to someone, signified by the

[56] Svetlana Boym, **"**Poetics and Politics of Estrangement: Viktor Shklovsky and Hannah Arendt," *Poetics Today* 26, no. 4 (2005), 583, 584.
[57] Boym, **"**Poetics and Politics of Estrangement," 586.
[58] Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," 9.; Gunn, "Making Art Strange," 30.

words ‘our master’s house’. The words ‘master’ and ‘plantation’ in the same sentence gives allusions to slavery, possibly offering a point of view of a slave reflecting on his past experience as a young child in a natural landscape. It is not until the start of the second paragraph and the specific mention of grass that it is made clear that the protagonist is someone who would normally eat grass once he is past the early stage of life, suggesting that he is something other than a human. It is a familiar scene made unfamiliar through the lack of habitual details directly related to humans. This defamiliarisation technique alters the way the reader thinks about the situation, and it challenges the reader to wonder about the description in question and to look for evidence in the text that may pinpoint what is being described.

The opening scene of *War Horse* is similar to *Black Beauty*: ‘My earliest memories are a confusion of hilly fields and dark, damp stables, and rats that scampered along the beams above my head’ (Morpurgo 3). The presence of stables and rats give the impression of a relatively poor situation in human terms, though not unimaginable from such a point of view. The absence of identifying details adds suspense to the text, leading up to the revelation of the nature of the narrator. However, the context is not so strange that the reader cannot imagine the outline of it. There is a need to know who the ‘I’ is so that readers can analyse the setting and relation to the story, in order to identify and engage with it. Once the narrator states ‘I was … a gangly, leggy colt’ (3) he identifies himself as a nonhuman animal, though the reader may look over this part of the text once more to make sure they are reading correctly, because a horse narrator is uncommon compared to the human counterpart.

The human point of view is so common and expected that only through the ‘decentring’ of the everyday human perspective can we access animal worlds, to learn to see things from their perspective rather than our own, as philosopher Vinciane Despret suggests .[59] In literature, a horse narrator reminds human readers that there are other ways of living in the world, different ways of seeing and appreciating life, and individual species have various needs independent of human needs. Thus, defamiliarisation allows us to perceive human actions in a critical way and challenge them. The device functions well in literature, but the next section will discuss whether the horse narration and the accompanying defamiliarisation works when the horse is no longer the speaker.

[59] Calarco, “Animal Studies,” 50.

**Adaptations of the Literary Horse**

After applying the theories of focalisation and defamiliarisation to a literary text, it is interesting to see if they can be applied to other media. What happens to the literary horse when it undergoes an adaptation into a visual or dramatic medium? It changes the reading of the stories in significant ways, depending on the producer or screenwriter's interpretation of what is important and what could be left out of the story. Movies and plays are made for the masses, and they represent a process of communication that takes place through technology, visual aids, and sound, something words on the page can only attempt to convey through a reader's imagination. Other aspects are lost in translation away from the page, particularly the effect of the first-person perspective.

Several films are adapted from *Black Beauty,* the most recent one released in 1994, bearing the same name and directed by Caroline Thompson. Beauty's narration and focalisation is retained in actor Alan Cumming's voice, telling about his circumstances along with accompanying scenes onscreen. Though Beauty's voice is there, retaining the important characteristic of Sewell's story, his perspective is weakened in the movie, because the audience sees the horse from a third person perspective. There is one notable scene, in which Beauty is equipped with the bearing-rein and it is being tightened, where the camera angle pretends to be from Beauty's left eye, creating a brief illusion of actually seeing through the eye of the horse. This particular camera technique may have been chosen for this scene due to the practical influence the novel had on people's understanding of the bearing-rein, as it is one of the most memorable details from the novel. This is an attempt at a first-person perspective, from inside the character's mind. It is an interesting scene, and it would have been interesting to see how this camera angle affected the film to a greater extent.

Whereas *Black Beauty* is remembered for its literary form first and foremost, *War Horse* became popular only after its visual media adaptations, firstly by Nick Stafford who adapted it into a stage play in 2007, and then by Spielberg who created a movie in 2011. The play in particular earned critical acclaim and increased the interest in the story, as it could now be accessed in a format that attracts people of all ages.[60] In Stafford's play, the horses are portrayed by impressive life-sized puppets made by South African Handspring Puppet Company. I went to see the play in November 2018 at Lyttelton Theatre in London, and my observations are based on that experience. The puppets add charm to the play as they are surprisingly adequate

[60] Sarah Lyall, "Undaunted Author of *War Horse* Reflects on Unlikely Hit," *The New York Times,* April 11, 2011, https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/12/books/michael-morpurgo-author-of-war-horse-an-unlikely-hit.html.

at portraying the emotions and feelings of Joey and Topthorn through body language, especially by moving their expressive ears and tales. There are three actors controlling each individual puppet, and in unison they make the equine noises. According to reviewer Susan Elkin, the 'sinuous equine movements and sounds' of the puppets are 'totally convincing'.[61] The use of the puppets is a reason in itself to see the play, as they are well made and offer a unique theatre experience.

However, Elkin finds that one of the issues the play has is the plot: 'Nick Stafford has distorted Michael Morpurgo's novel to such an extent that a newcomer would be baffled by much of the action.'[62] Having seen the play myself I agree with this statement, and one of the reasons for this distortion is the lack of Joey's guiding narrative voice, because the first-person perspective of the novel is lost. The horse can no longer reveal his thoughts in the two adaptations, only body language. In theory the voice could have been retained if someone spoke as Joey in a voice-over throughout the play, but creative director Mervyn Millar argued that a human voice would 'undermine that special perspective'.[63] In one way, this could be interpreted as a more natural and realistic way of portraying the horse. However, this makes it more difficult to follow the settings when the scenes change, suddenly going from scenes with Albert, then moving on to scenes from the war where Joey is. In the original novel Joey narrates a continuous story where we follow him through the stages of war, making it easier to understand how he ends up in the various places, while the play reduces his perspective, focusing more on Albert and his quest to find Joey. There are therefore scenes in the play for Albert, such as Scenes 14, 16, and 18, not from the original story but invented for the stage production.[64]

In a book about the creation of the play, Millar informs that the loss of Joey's voice was 'the first decision' to be made when adapting the story for the play, and it is a choice that results in a smaller focus on the animal in war, reducing Joey's animal agency.[65] Though the horse's narration is taken away, Millar argues 'it's not the viewpoint itself that is the heart of Morpurgo's intention', and proceeds with an ambiguous quotation that states that 'the aim behind the voice [of the narrator]' is to 'be able to listen to the voices of the British soldiers, German soldiers, French civilians, so that you see the war through their eyes and through the

[61] Susan Elkin, "Theatre: War Horse," *The Stage,* October 5, 2007, 18. (See British Newspaper Archive).
[62] Elkin, "Theatre: War Horse," 18.
[63] Mervyn Millar, *The Horse's Mouth: How Handspring and The National Theatre made* War Horse, 2nd ed. (London: Oberon, 2007), 19.
[64] Nick Stafford, War Horse: *Based on the Novel by Michael Morpurgo*. London: Faber and Faber, 2007, 40, 46, 53.
[65] Millar, *The Horse's Mouth,* 18.

horse's eyes at the same time'.[66] While it seems to be a statement from Morpurgo, as he is specifically mentioned before the quotation, no source is given for it. Nor does the quotation acknowledge the importance of the horse's perspective in allowing the British, German, and French voices to be heard. The interactions between humans of different nationalities lead to issues of verbal communication, yet the horse remains the constant being between all the humans, without the need for words. A human narrator would be assumed to be biased in favour of one side and discriminating towards another. To the horse narrator, the various human representatives are the same and no such confusion of communication occurs between him and those he meets. Joey's narrative and focalisation is what allows the war story to be told from a neutral point of view, because it works in favour of displaying the widespread anguish of the war, not just from a biased human side. By removing Joey's voice, the play loses the effect that drives the plot along: without the horse, it would be difficult to transition between the British and the German sides. The feeling of sympathy would only be available for one side or the other, but with the horse, as demonstrated in this thesis, the audience sympathises on behalf of all the soldiers as well as the horse.

In the novel, Morpurgo is successful in his attempt to 'tell of the universal suffering' humans and animals experienced during WWI and it is made possible through Joey's narration.[67] While history has normally focused on the 'estimated 9 million' dead soldiers of the war, the number of horses who perished is nearly equal to the human numbers.[68] 'Universal' thus means across species as well, though the animal contribution and suffering in the war is rarely acknowledged the way it should, which is why Morpurgo's horse narrator is so important. The play, however, undermines the horse's agency and shifts the focus more to the human part of the story. Erasing Joey's voice results in less attention to the horse and its treatment by humans, and it becomes a human war story, about a man's quest to find something he loves. One of the play's creators, Tim Morris, confirms this when he says, 'this show certainly isn't a tragedy about the sufferings of animals in war. The point about it is that the horse is a perfect witness to the human experiences of war on both sides.'[69] In saying this, he exemplifies a type of human manipulation of animals, proving the argument of professor Karla Armbruster, who points out that literary animals are often no more than projections of human concern and used

[66] Millar, *The Horse's Mouth*, 20.
[67] Wadham, "Interview with author Michael Morpurgo."; see also Millar, *The Horse's Mouth,* 22.
[68] Raulff, *Farewell to the Horse*, 106.
[69] Millar, *The Horse's Mouth,* 22.

for human purposes, thus 'another way humans exploit other animals for their own purposes'.[70] As Morris sees it, Joey is a means to an end to highlight the sufferings of the humans, overlooking the obvious possibility of including the animal suffering as well. This is the type of character analysis literary animal studies wants to deconstruct, because the horse is prevented from having agency on behalf of his real equivalents and a being subject of empathy itself. The brave soldiers fighting in the war are remembered, but war horses also played a central part, as the novel *War Horse* demonstrates, and they should get the recognition they deserve.

Spielberg's film version draws on both the novel and the play. Theatre critic Jennifer Parker-Starbuck compares the two adaptations of *War Horse* in an essay and concludes that the puppets in the play create a 'more authentic sense of the horse', a paradox considering that the movie uses real horses when representing equine characters from the book.[71] Her reasoning behind this conclusion is that the horses in the movie are overshadowed by sentimentality that takes away their significance in the story and makes them participants in the human nostalgia associated with the past. The real horses used in the movie do not stand out; they are a common and predictable part of a plot that has elements of cavalry and military pride. The puppets in the play, however, have a 'sense of agency' in their engineering, in their movements that are respectful and reminiscent of a real horse.[72] The puppets themselves are works of art, and it is the value of art and literature itself that is the point here, not the (in)accuracy of equine representation. This goes along with the point I make in my Introduction that an artistic element is beneficial in representations of animals and the human engagement with them. For the novel it is the horse narrator that brings a text to a literary level, and on stage it is the puppet. Though the puppets add a great artistic element to the story on stage, I maintain that the literary voice of Joey is invaluable to the story due to the animal agency he is given.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the narrative style of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*, because both have a horse as the first-person narrator and protagonist. The unique horse narratives add crucial value to their stories, making them more than simple horse stories. By applying a narratological

[70] Karla Armbruster, "What Do We Want from Talking Animals? Reflections on Literary Representations of Animal Voices and Minds," in *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*, ed. Margo Demello (New York: Routledge, 2015), 21.
[71] Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, "Animal Ontologies and Media Representations: Robotics, Puppets, and the Real of *War Horse*," *Theatre Journal* 65, no. 3 (2013), 390.
[72] Parker-Starbuck, "Animal Ontologies and Media Representations," 386.

analysis to the texts, I show how the horse narrators and characters are significant to encourage the audience to see from a horse's perspective.

Mieke Bal's theory of narration and focalisation helps to illuminate a text's narrative construction, by establishing how the narrator is related to the protagonist, and how the subjective views of each narrator and focaliser influences the reader. Focalisation, the relation between the one who sees and that which is seen, is valuable when considering why a narrator or a character's subjective perspective would influence interpretations of a text. There are arguments in favour of keeping narration and focalisation as separate functions, but Bal and Phelan argue that they are combined in certain instances, which is the case with the narrator-focalisers Beauty and Joey. Their subjective views are important to the way the two novels are read, because they are not simply human characters in animal disguise, like many other literary animals, but animal characters that represent their real equivalents, narrating with animal angency.

Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarisation device is triggered through the subjective perspectives of the horses. Defamiliarisation, through the horse narrators and focalisers, is a functional device in the texts that comments on equine life in a way a human perspective cannot. The uniqueness of the narrator and its focalisation is what creates defamiliarisation in the two horse stories. It works towards opening up the possibility of an alternative mode of relation towards animals, through narration and focalisation of the animals themselves.[73] The animal perspectives offer new outlooks on human conduct, seen and described in different ways than readers would usually consider them. Defamiliarisation allows readers to consider Western society in a new light, to see how humans in all classes treat our fellow creatures. In relation to my overall argument and contribution to literary animal studies, this chapter shows that considering horses from the perspective of an imaginary horse can make us aware of how we are treating creatures in the pursuit of human success. As such, animal narratives may work in favour of familiarising nonhuman beings as sentient individuals. Attempting to tell a story from the perspective of a horse or another animal is the act of bridging the gap between species and creating an understanding.

Having established that the horse narrators influence how their stories are read, I will go on to explore how the active imagination of life as a horse encourages readers to be empathetic with the animals portrayed in the text. Narrative perspective is part of this, and so is vocabulary in shaping specific attitudes towards characters.

[73] Calarco, "Animal Studies," 52.

## Chapter 3: Narrative Imagination and Narrative Empathy

'[I]t was a piteous and terrible sight to see a fellow creature … discarded and forgotten'.

Joey (Morpurgo 102)

Thus far, this thesis has explored the historical context in which *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* were written and published. Furthermore, it has delved into the horse narration that makes these novels unique. In order for human readers to connect to the nonhuman narrators, it is important to consider the effect that language has upon the reader's emotions. Sewell and Morpurgo both employ words and phrases that evoke specific emotions towards or against fictional characters. These are not guaranteed to evoke the same emotions in every individual reader, but a pattern of empathetic textual vocabulary in favour of the horse is prevalent, due to the nature of the narrators and focalisers. Empathy is what will be explored in this chapter, where it is argued that the nature of the horse narrators and their dispositions encourage empathy on behalf of various groups in society who are in situations they may not be responsible for. While exercising empathy for fictional characters does not ensure benevolent action to alleviate others' suffering in real life, at least it can educate about alternative perspectives and perhaps change ways of thinking about individuals or groups in general.

This final chapter will tie the thesis together as a whole by looking at how the horse narratives work to encourage empathy towards those who are treated unjustly. After a brief introduction to the field of cognitive literary studies, the chapter will turn to two main scholars and their arguments about literature and empathy, before finally applying a theory of narrative empathy to *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum is an advocate for the teaching of literature as a way to broaden universal understanding for distant groups and gives literature a high status for its possibility for societal change through 'reason and imagination'.[1] I am arguing alongside Nussbaum in her advocacy for certain teachings of literature as important educational components, though I specify the need for animal literature to be a more prominent part such education. Literary critic Suzanne Keen is not so certain about literature's influence, arguing that despite the common belief that novels and certain narrative techniques lead readers to behave in positive ways, there is no significant empirical evidence to support

[1] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 297.

this.[2] It is difficult to obtain such evidence, as well as difficult to confirm whether it is the novel-reading that is the cause, or other factors within individual readers. Assumptions are still made about literary empathy despite this, and discussion about literature and its potential societal impact must continue, as there are other ways to find empathetic evidence of reading. Alternative ways include research on the context around the creation and publication of a piece of literature, as well as research on reader reception of the text, as demonstrated in Chapter 1. Historical sources such as the RSPCA reports of animal abuse may not point directly to the literary empathy within a text and its possible subsequent impact on a reader. However, sources allow interpretation of historical contexts and consideration of relations between factors, like the publication of a book overtly invested in horse welfare and the actual status of horses as reported by people at the same time. If there had not been reports on animal welfare, it would be assumed that the book had little effect.

Empathy is an important aspect of the horse stories, because the horse narrators urge the reader to feel with the animal characters. Briefly returning to the concept of defamiliarisation as discussed in Chapter 2, it is interesting to notice that this technique has been combined with the study of literary empathy, and with nonhuman narrators, in the 2014 article 'The Storied Lives of Non-human Narrators' by Lars Bernaerts et al. These authors argue that defamiliarisation is 'more accurate' as a concept when it is in the company of empathy, because personal experience that readers project onto animal narrators is often associated with emotion.[3] If a person dislikes bears, for example, fear might be the prime emotion when reading about a bear, yet if this bear becomes the narrator, the defamiliarisation technique might change the person's feelings towards the animal through understanding what life is like as the bear in a situation. This leads to an estrangement of old fears and an experience of new feelings, working in the bear's favour. Further, Bernaerts et al. claim that if the reader is unable to empathise, then defamiliarisation 'could not be actualized in the reading experience' either, as feelings would remain familiar and habitual.[4] Indeed, previously mentioned professor Allen comments on this point also in her book *Animals in American Literature*, suggesting that 'where animals are, so is emotion'.[5] Sewell and Morpurgo pull on the emotional strings of the reader, attempting to create empathy with their characters, and this is particularly true through the use of first-person perspective. Empathy is perhaps one of the most important things humans need in the attempt

[2] Suzanne Keen, "Narrative Empathy," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 3rd ed. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 1301.
[3] Lars Bernaerts *et al*., "The Storied Lives of Non-human Narrators," *Narrative* 22, no. 1 (2014), 69.
[4] Bernaerts *et al*., "The Storied Lives of Non-human Narrators," 73.
[5] Allen, *Animals in American Literature*, 7.

to understand the life of an animal. An ethologist (a scientist of animal behaviour) is able to tell a reader of the uniqueness of individual species, but literature offer opportunities for the imagination to really try to understand what life as a nonhuman is like.

**Cognitive Literary Studies**

As the chapters so far have shown, this thesis is interdisciplinary in nature due to the many fields it draws on. From history and narratology studies, I turn briefly to cognitive literary studies, a field that is concerned with cognition in relation to literature, particularly if, how, and why a literary text influences the mind in various ways. English professor Lisa Zunshine, in the introduction to *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies* (2015), emphasises the 'dynamic, relational nature' of cognitive literary studies, because it encompasses many combinations of approaches to literature.[6] According to her, the best definition of cognitive literary studies was given by Alan Richardson, who said that it is 'the work of literary critics and theorists vitally interested in cognitive science'.[7] Suzanne Keen is one such critic, and the volume contains a contribution by Keen on narrative empathy and human rights.

Neuroscientists research the biological function in our brains in relation to reading, and they find evidence that what is called 'mirror neurons' in the human brain reacting similarly to the same activity, whether it is real, perceived, or imagined.[8] The studies focus on the cognitive aspects of reading, specifically how the brain reacts when reading literature, nonfiction as well as fiction.[9] One of the subcategories of cognitive studies is 'affect theory', which 'begins with the perception that affect is primary in our lives', that we 'feel before we think.'[10] Affect theory is directly linked to emotions, and psychologist Silvan Tomkins first proposed that emotional affects came in pairs, such as interest and excitement.[11] Affect is an interesting approach that grew in the 1960s with Tomkins, but was coupled with literature in the 1990s.[12] In relation to the horse narratives explored in this thesis, affect theory would include examination of textual sequences and language that may anticipate particular affect in readers. Within cognitive

[6] Lisa Zunshine, "Introduction to Cognitive Literary Studies," *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Literary Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 1.
[7] Alan Richardson qtd. in Zunshine, "Introduction to Cognitive Literary Studies," 1.
[8] Charles Duncan, Georgene Bess-Montgomery, and Viktor Osinubi, "Why Martha Nussbaum is Right: The Empirical Case for the Value of Reading and Teaching Fiction," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 19, no. 2 (2017), 247.
[9] Duncan, Bess-Montgomery, and Osinubi, "Why Martha Nussbaum is Right," 247.
[10] Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, "Introduction: In the Body of the Text," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 3rd ed. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 1257.
[11] Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction," 1257.
[12] Rivkin and Ryan, "Introduction," 1257.

literary studies and affect theory we also find the concept of '[m]emory, experience, and the capacity to take another's perspective'.[13] All these factors are linked to empathy.

There are various processes used to study empathy in an empirical manner, such as Functional Magnetic Resonance Imagining (fMRI-scans), Author Recognition Test (developed by Keith Stanovich and Richard West, 1989), the Interpersonal Perception Task (developed by Mark Constanzo and Dane Archer, 1989), and the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test (developed by Simon Baron-Cohen, 1997).[14] These are all empirical tests that research regularities between reading and altruistic acts, and Keen requests more of them as current research is inadequate in terms of certifying the link between novel-reading and empathy. Keen is particularly interested in the empathy-altruism hypothesis, an investigation developed by Daniel Batson in 1991, exploring whether empathy leads to altruistic behaviour.[15] Whether this hypothesis can ever be properly proved is uncertain, because literature can rarely be measured in scientific ways, it rather depends on every individual reader, their interpretations, and their possible resulting behaviour.

Psychology professor Keith Oatley sees the reading of fiction as a kind of simulator for the mind, in the same way a flight simulator functions as a replica of a real plane in order for a pilot to practice flying.[16] He sees them both as processes of learning, because fiction, a vehicle for empathy, simulates situations and social relationships that have equivalents in real life. Thus, he attributes fiction the potential for affect. Coincidentally, Oatley also mentions defamiliarisation as an important literary device that can 'invite emotional reflection and reappraisal'.[17] Defamiliarisation appears in a discussion of what kinds of fictional traits are important for cognitive effects and engagement with a text. The 'reappraisal' suggests a new outlook on an otherwise familiar object, as discussed in the previous chapter. Not only does a horse narrator offer a new way of thinking about horses, but also a new way of thinking about the human-horse relationship. Defamiliarisation can be found with human narrators as well, but horse narrators emphasise the contrast between an animal perspective and a human perspective. The text thus has a higher level of estrangement, as it is not only a change of mind and culture, but a change of perceived body, sensation and movement.

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[13] Suzanne Keen, *Empathy and the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 27.
[14] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 248.
[15] Suzanne Keen, "Empathetic Hardy: Bounded, Ambassadorial, and Broadcast Strategies of Narrative Empathy," *Poetics Today* 32, no. 2 (2011), 384.
[16] Keith Oatley, "Fiction: Simulation of Social Worlds," *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* 20, no. 8 (2016), 619.
[17] Oatley, "Fiction," 622.

**Nussbaum's Theory of Narrative Imagination**

Martha Nussbaum gives literature affective purposes along the same lines as Oatley. In her chapter 'The Narrative Imagination', which is part of her larger work *Cultivating Humanity* (1997), she argues in favour of literary and philosophical subjects as necessary parts of all kinds of academic fields, not only within the humanities, but in psychology, biological sciences, and medicine as well. She argues that literature can 'transport us, while remaining ourselves, into the life of another, revealing similarities but also profound differences between the life and thought of that other and myself and making it comprehensible'.[18] It is this transportation, this exercise in empathy and perspective-taking, that is a valuable part of literature. When reading about others, even in fiction, we 'cultivate humanity', learn about other cultures, become more understanding, and develop our capacity for compassion with those different from ourselves. Our imagination is what makes us learn empathy, defined as 'the ability to imagine what it is like to be in [another] person's place'.[19] Nussbaum uses several literary examples in her article, such as Sophocles' *Philoctetes* (409 BC) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952), both of which deal with 'invisibility and the condition of being transparent to and for one's fellow citizens' and invite readers to 'know and see more than the unseeing characters'.[20] This invisibility, from the perspective of the one who is overlooked, encourages readers to actually see others around themselves. This, I argue, is one of the important aspects of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse,* because they focus on the obvious, but often ignored, four-legged engines of modernity.

There are several groups that may feel invisible in society. Nussbaum insists upon incorporating into academia works of literature that represent groups that are largely neglected in literature, stating that

> if the literary imagination develops compassion, and if compassion is essential for civic responsibility, then we have good reason to teach works that promote the types of compassionate understanding we want and need. This means including works that give voice to the experiences of groups in our society that we urgently need to understand, such as members of other cultures, ethnic and racial minorities, women, and lesbians and gay men.[21]

[18] Martha C. Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity: The Narrative Imagination," in *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, 3rd ed. (London: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 400.
[19] Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity," 386.
[20] Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity," 384.
[21] Nussbaum, "Cultivating Humanity," 392.

Challenging readers to view life from a new perspective, imaginative works encourage readers to empathise, and enable 'us to comprehend the motives and choices of people different than ourselves', and to understand that they have similar concerns as other groups in society. Animals should be on this list of groups we need to understand, because as victims of speciesist attitudes and systematic exploitation, it is high time for them to be part of the educational curriculum, in schools and universities.

Nussbaum too realises this, later arguing in 'The Moral Status of Animals' (2006) that a 'truly global justice requires … looking around the world at other sentient beings with whose lives our own are inextricably and complexly intertwined.'[22] Her article on animals focuses on the philosophical and ethical consideration of animals, discussing prominent names such as Immanuel Kant, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, and Peter Singer. Her own views extend beyond these to what she terms as her 'capabilities approach': 'Each form of life is worthy of respect, and it is a problem of justice when a creature does not have the opportunity to unfold its (valuable) power, to flourish in its own way, and lead a life with dignity.'[23] Nussbaum sees dignity as belonging to every creature, yet many animals are denied theirs, and 'the fact that so many animals never get to move around, enjoy the air, exchange affection with other members of their kind', certainly proves that too many animals are not attributed the dignity or respect they ethically have a right to.[24] Her philosophical discussion does not go into literary animal representations, which makes it suitable for me to add animal literature to her arguments in favour of world citizenship founded on compassion for all living beings. If the first-person narration of *Black Beauty* or *War Horse* leads the reader to feel empathetic, and that empathy results in a feeling of 'civic responsibility' in relation to animals, there is no question of whether these novels should have a dedicated space in any curriculum where it is relevant.

Suzanne Keen mentions one point which both supports and problematises Nussbaum's argument: the field named narrative medicine focuses on the influence of literary analysis and empathy in the communication with and about medical patients as human beings rather than

[22] Martha C. Nussbaum, "The Moral Status of Animals," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 52, no. 22 (2006), B6-B8. For a more detailed outline about her views on animals, see her chapter "Beyond 'Compassion and Humanity': Justice for Nonhuman Animals" in *Animal Rights: Current Debates and New Directions*, ed. Cass R. Runstein and Martha C. Nussbaum (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 274-292. For a critical evaluation of Nussbaum's views, see Anders Schinkel, "Martha Nussbaum on Animal Rights," *Ethics and Environment* 13, no. 1 (2008), 41-69.
[23] Nussbaum, "The Moral Status of Animals," B6-B8.
[24] Nussbaum, "The Moral Status of Animals," B6-B8.

objects of scientific scrutiny.[25] Here is the importance of seeing and understanding a patient, which is an exercise in empathy. This is an example of the robust application of narrative imagination and empathy that Nussbaum wants. This point, however, is grounded on the theoretical belief that empathy can be taught and developed, which may not be the case. There are issues when considering how to test the link between novel-reading and pro-social behaviour. The trouble with empirical research on this topic is that there are many factors that may be out of the control of researchers, including personal background, education, age, and experience. Then there is the question of what kind of literature is the most efficient in establishing empathy, which I will not go into here, but mention as a point for further research. In their article advocating Nussbaum's humanitarian literature argument, Duncan and others mention 'literary quality' as an influential factor.[26] Quality is not defined here, but literary quality can vary, because there is no piece of literature that is universally appreciated by everyone who has read it.

**Keen's Theory of Narrative Empathy**

Nussbaum's narrative imagination fosters what Keen terms 'narrative empathy' through the act of visualising someone else and their life and feeling what this person would feel. Keen defines narrative empathy as 'the sharing of feeling and perspective taking induced by reading, viewing, hearing, or imagining narratives of another's situations and condition.'[27] This sharing is greatly determined by the narrative situation, as explored in the previous chapter, due to the potential impact the narrative perspectives and techniques may have on the reader's feeling of empathy. Her chapter, as part of an extended argument undertaken in her book *Empathy and the Novel* (2007), examines empathy in relation to literature, discussing what empathy is in psychological terms, what her theory of narrative empathy is, and how selected narrative techniques can affect readers.[28] In her research she questions the 'contemporary truism that novel reading cultivates empathy that produces good citizens for the world', and while she is positive to the 'robustness of narrative empathy', that it may play a role in altruism, she is sceptical about the existence of a direct link between reading and altruistic action.[29] A narrative technique such as first-person narration, and character identification are two things often associated with increased empathy

[25] Keen, *Empathy and the Novel,* 12.
[26] Duncan, Bess-Montgomery, and Osinubi, "Why Martha Nussbaum is Right," 251.
[27] "Suzanne Keen: 'Literature and Empathy' Lecture", YouTube video, 43:47, "Abraham Kuyper Center," November 17, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ee9uaw3sz48.
[28] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1285.
[29] Keen, *Empathy and the Novel,* xv.

for a fictional character, but they do not guarantee the same reaction in all readers, as there are numerous factors that may interfere, as pointed out above. One reader's emotional interaction with the text varies from another's.

These factors are indicators of why there is a discussion of whether or not literature affects empathy and altruism. Chapter 1 investigates the historical context in which *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* were published, and considers the author, the text, and the audience as separate stages of interpretation. Keen too sees a narrative as being a conversation between an author and readers. She writes that

> narrative empathy embraces three distinct aspects of the narrative arts: its production, its reception, and the mediation of fictional representations and narrative techniques. Narrative empathy thus involves the authorial empathy of writers in the act of creation, the empathy of the audience(s) on the receiving end, and the textual evidence that bears the traces of strategic empathizing in narrative techniques and representations of fictional worlds.[30]

As such, narrative empathy is not purely decided by the author, who constructs narratives using various narrative techniques such as perspective, as discussed in Chapter 2, displaying characters' inner thoughts, opening up for character identification. An author may employ certain devices in the belief that they will produce an authorial desired effect, but this will not work on all readers. Empathy is also dependent on readers' reception of these devices. Keen's distinction of narrative aspects demonstrates that literary empathy's impact on behaviour is rarely predictable due to the many interpretive stages a text goes through.

Texts bear evidence of vocabulary advocating narrative empathy for one character instead of another. In her article 'Empathetic Hardy', Keen analyses various ways in which Thomas Hardy's written works display types of what she calls strategic empathy. Hardy (1840-1928) was a contemporary of Sewell (1820-1878), writing about humans, animals, and nature supposedly with the aim of 'mobilising readers' empathy on behalf of others'.[31] His career unfolded at the same time as psychological research related to empathy developed, but he arrived at many of the same conclusions without science, as his own 'novels document his observations of animal and human behaviour', thanks to the inspiration of earlier literature like

[30] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 366.
[31] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 385-6.

Shakespeare.[32] According to Keen, the majority of his critics thought of Hardy as a pessimistic author, yet what they thought of as pessimistic was his way of supporting a progression of compassionate feelings towards others, or as Keen terms his narratives and representations, 'diagnostic shocks designed to provoke the altruism of the future'.[33] Along similar lines, Sewell and Morpurgo do not depict scenes of abuse for no reason; they portray selected human characters as having immoral dispositions and causing suffering to others for the sake of consequently showing optimism about what one can do to prevent future suffering.

There are several ways a text can convey such optimism and encourage empathy. Keen's term 'authorial strategic empathising' 'occurs when an author employs empathy in the crafting of fictional texts', often with an agenda, like political commentary.[34] It is 'an attempt to direct an emotional transaction through a fictional work aimed at a particular audience,' an audience the author believes will be influenced by the text.[35] It is highly likely, based on her own written commentary, that Sewell wrote *Black Beauty* with the intention of making readers feel on behalf of horses who were treated without care or respect. The text's emotionally charged language invites readers to feel with her fictional animal characters, and to see reality in fictional animals, and realise that something can be done about mistreatment of horses. Morpurgo wrote a text about WWI as seen from a new angle, which ultimately portrays war as a waste of life, particularly of those who are innocently dragged into it. The neutrality is made possible through the subjective focalisation, which urges narrative empathy for the blameless.

As she demonstrates in the Hardy article and her other writings, Keen distinguishes three types of narrative strategic empathy: 'ambassadorial strategic empathy', 'bounded strategic empathy', and 'broadcast strategic empathy'. These types of empathy are strategic in the sense that they are designed to deliberately manipulate readers into feeling a certain way about one or several groups in question. It is interesting to think about these types in relation to *Black Beauty* and *War Horse,* to understand how the texts construct their messages of animal welfare and advocacy of compassion. Because the two protagonists of my chosen novels are horses, their literary voices tend to lead perceptive readers to feel on behalf of them and their kind. The types of strategic empathy will be demonstrated with extracts from both novels with the goal of showing how the empathies are constructed on a textual level.

[32] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 360.
[33] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 363.
[34] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1299.
[35] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1300.

**Ambassadorial Strategic Empathy**

Ambassadorial strategic empathy 'addresses chosen others with the aim of cultivating their empathy for the in-group, often to a specific end', but Keen realises that this does not 'exclusively' apply to 'other human beings'.[36] She mentions Sewell's historical context as an example: 'In the nineteenth century, compassionate representations of suffering animals advanced the cause of animal welfare through ambassadorial empathy for pit ponies, cab horses, and other working animals.' This strategy is particularly sensitive to context when it comments on an issue in a certain period of time that is not as urgent in another time or place. The ambassadorial type is the most prominent type of empathy in both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* due to the equine narration, and it is a challenge for the imagination to see the world through the eyes of a horse. *Black Beauty* exemplifies a product of its time, in which Sewell is functioning as an ambassador for the working horses by supposedly representing equine communication in human language. Morpurgo did not write *War Horse* during the war, but in the 1980s instead, where the contemporary issue was the attitude to war and its victims, animals included. He is an ambassador for the war horses that were used in the war, taking a pacifist stance that is working to prevent conflict by demonstrating the universal destruction of war.

*Black Beauty* is structured in a way that readers are introduced to examples of how an animal's treatment should or should not be in order for the animal to have better welfare and consequently be better behaved. As the story progresses, we learn of the negative experiences that horses encounter. Beacons are constructed to function as guides to better treatment, which includes both places and people. Life as a horse can be very pleasant, suggested by Beauty's residence at Birtwick Park throughout most of Part I, and the park is constructed as the ideal place for a horse, where they are worked, but also given time to be horses and to fulfil their equine needs. It is a place of positivity: Beauty 'never was in a better box' than the one he got in the 'roomy', 'pleasant and airy' stable with 'very nice oats' and social opportunities with other horses (Sewell 17). This is where Beauty meets Ginger for the first time, the horse he is most 'intimate' with (22). She is the epitome of the ambassadorial strategic empathy that advocates for better horse welfare, because she exemplifies the correlation between her behaviour and the attitudes of the humans handling her. The 'bad habit of biting and snapping' is not simply a result of her personality, but enforced by the 'hard voice', 'hard eye', and 'hard hand' that surrounded her at an early age (18, 25-26). Her aggressive nature, the negativity surrounding her past, becomes less pronounced and outright positive at Birtwick Park where

[36] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1291.; Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 365.

her welfare is better. She ‘grew more gentle and cheerful’, even nuzzling John the groom in a ‘friendly trustful way’ in this location (31). The Park is thus associated with a place of love and comfort. Beauty confirms this in the end of the book when he recalls his happy memories of ‘the orchard at Birtwick, standing with my old friends’ (162). When he is sold from the Park, life takes a turn for the worse in general.

The significance of the introduction to positive treatment is that in all the new places Beauty comes to, they are compared to Birtwick. When they do not provide the same high standards of welfare, the ambassadorial empathy for Beauty and other horses is enhanced by the knowledge of how good his life was before the human social hierarchy affected his welfare. Beauty’s repeated movement to new places with new owners adds suspense to the reading of the text, because ‘”a horse never knows who may buy him … it is all chance”’ for them (16). Though Beauty never strays from his mother’s lesson that the ‘better I behaved, the better I should be treated’, he has no choice in the human handling him (16). Beauty tells readers about ‘all the different kinds of bad and ignorant driving to which we horses are subjected’, in the attempt to make readers aware of their suffering (89). ‘We are doing our very best to get along, uncomplaining and obedient,’ he says, ‘though often sorely harassed and down-hearted’ (92). The plural ‘we’ here encompasses him and his fellow equines, as opposed to the ones they try to ‘get along’ with, the humans that are difficult and uncompromising in their practices revolving around their own interests.

Unlike Beauty’s comfortable early years, Joey’s life starts off in a traumatic way. He is separated from his mother, never to see her again, in a ‘terrible hubbub’ that is a horse sale (Morpurgo 3). Once he is ‘disposed of’ to someone who has been ‘haggling over how little’ he is worth, he is ‘dragged along’ by his new owner, Mr. Narracott (4-5). These verbs, dispose, haggle, and drag, are all negative words in this context. They set the tone for this part of the novel, where the negative actions are turned on the young foal, who is newly parted from his mother and as innocent as a being can be. The ambassadorial empathy comes across on behalf of the horse, due to the hostile environment experienced through his own perspective. At the farm, however, Joey becomes acquainted with Albert, who cares for him and makes his life easier. The other farm horse, Zoey, becomes Joey’s other companion, and the years on the farm are the foundations on which Joey’s personality is shaped.

After being a farm horse ploughing the fields, Joey is enrolled in the army as a cavalry horse in WWI. Joey is now a speaker on behalf of his fellow war horses. When he describes the sight of the cart horses Heinie and Coco lying dead on the ground, he asks readers to visualise with him:

> The field vets shook their heads in despair, and pulled back [the horses] they could for rest and recuperation; but some had deteriorated so much that they were led away and shot there and then after the vet's inspection. Heinie went away that one morning, and we passed him lying in the mud, a collapsed wreck of a horse; and so eventually did Coco who was hit in his neck by flying shrapnel and had to be destroyed where he lay by the side of the road. No matter how much I disliked him – and he was a vicious beast – it was a piteous and terrible sight to see a fellow creature with whom I had pulled for so long, discarded and forgotten in a ditch (102).

This extract portrays the conditions that the horses and humans were in during the war. The language gives an indication of the miserable attitude towards the dead horses: the use of the word 'destroyed' as describing how Coco was put to sleep, and then his 'deteriorated' and 'discarded' equine body gives connotations of machinery that no longer functions as it should and is disposed of. Horses are too big and too heavy for the men to even consider taking the corpses with them, a logical argument that explains why the horses are left behind, but from the perspective of Joey, who sees the remnants of his companions, it is a painful sight to imagine. Joey's equine nature draws attention to his own kind and how they are discarded, as it could have been him lying there. The textual example above gives no mention of human bodies, thereby providing space to properly contemplate horses in war, as Joey focuses on these 'wrecks' of his previous team-mates. Even Coco, though he is described as vicious, did not deserve his fate. He may have been someone's favourite horse once: it is not unlikely that his temper was made worse by the horrible conditions of war and a lack of compassionate treatment of him who had a bad temper. Joey does not give the reader reasons for Coco's behaviour, but remembering *Black Beauty*, it is possible that he is a horse like Ginger, who was spoiled by humans. Here is an example of the effect of ambassadorial strategy, because *Black Beauty* gave background information explaining Ginger's behaviour, who represents a misunderstood equine. This allows one to apply the same logic to any horse who is described as aggressive, and rather than punishing them even more, a new approach based on kindness and patience should be attempted. This logic is in itself proof that literature influences attitudes, as it is a direct application of ideas presented in *Black Beauty*.

Ambassadorial strategic empathy is often connected to a particular issue specific to context, such as the welfare case of Sewell's time. Here the ambassadorial empathy is indeed bound by time, but it is also general enough to be a plea for horses today, as they are still used

by humans in one form or another, though to a lesser extent than previously. Morpurgo's ambassadorial job makes sure the equine war effort is not forgotten, and knowledge is rekindled thanks to his story, including the stage and movie adaptations too. In addition, ambassadorial empathy is important in Nussbaum's cultivation of humanity, because it encourages thinking across established groups, and tries to connect them as an ecosystem, that they are dependent on one another.

**Bounded Strategic Empathy**

Bounded empathy 'operates within an in-group, stemming from experiences of mutuality and leading to feeling with familiar others.'[37] Whereas ambassadorial empathy represents groups who are otherwise different or distant from oneself, such as animals, bounded operates within spheres of the familiar, such as similar-cultured humans. It primarily encompasses other humans on a local or regional level, such as people of different social classes, gender, age, professions, and so on. When it is successful, bounded empathy is kindled through character identification, finding familiar traits in a person despite differences. Keen's example of bounded strategic empathy is Hardy and his act to bring attention to 'the individuality and humanity of people' that his 'literate, middle- and upper-class contemporaries' thought of as 'peasants'.[38] By doing so, his educated readers may adopt a more compassionate attitude towards those who are not so privileged as themselves, through an empathetic understanding of an individual person's life situation. We find similar examples in *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*, which is crucial, because many nonhuman beings are dependent on positive human attitudes in order to have content lives.

We see examples of bounded empathy in *Black Beauty* when considering the positive empathy that is constructed for selected human characters who treat horses well, such as John Manly the coachman and Jerry Barker the cab driver. The text focuses on their good and honest attitudes, independent of their social status, and invites identification with their mentality that kindness goes a long way further than punishment. The human characters viable for readers' empathy are role models for a culture with better harmony between animal and man. Then there are characters like Nicholas Skinner, who serves as an example of a careless man who gives no thought to his animals or employees, and his greed earns him little empathy. Many of the characters, however, do not fit a strict good or evil binary, but have traits that earn them feelings

[37] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1291.
[38] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 373.

of pity, despite them behaving in questionable ways to their horses. There are factors playing into whether or not horses are in good hands or not, money being a major one.

The text is mainly employing ambassadorial strategic empathy in favour of the horses that are represented, but there are instances where bounded empathy is set up for the human characters to offer an understanding of individual situations. In Chapter 39 Beauty tells us that he was a lucky cab horse in relation to many others he witnessed, because he was owned by his driver, which prevented Beauty from being rented out to reckless drivers. The drivers who could not afford their own horses were only thinking of 'how to get their money' out of the horses they rented, as they would first need to pay the owner of the horse before they could profit from a day's work (Sewell 128). Thus, many cab horses were in horrific states and driven to exhaustion and talked about as if their lives do not matter. This is how Beauty narrates the beginning of this chapter, creating a context of the unfortunate situations cab horses could be in. The men are here initially painted as greedy, willing to drive their rented horse to the ground for a few shillings extra. The ambassadorial empathy frames the horses as the receivers of empathy, because they had a 'dreadful time … jaded or ill-used' even though they worked hard (128).

Then, bounded strategic empathy becomes evident in the case of Seedy Sam, one of the cab drivers who has no choice but to work hard for little profit. Narrator Beauty allows Seedy Sam to defend his situation: he works 'fourteen or sixteen hours a day' and has six children and a wife to feed (128). In reply to a comment about the state of his rented horse, he says: 'If the police have any business with the matter, it ought to be with the masters who charge us so much, or with the fares that are fixed so low … I don't ill-use the horse for the sake of it … 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' (128-9). The text redirects the negative focus towards the cab-owners who own whole stables of horses, which is reinforced in Chapter 47 when Skinner, one such owner, is indeed Beauty's master. Sam is aware that his horse is tired, but he has to prevent his own family from starving, which is an appeal to the universality of family and responsibilities to kin, because providing for one's living is a universal reason for work. The bounded strategic empathy has here directed empathy on behalf of the working classes that cannot but do their jobs. It does not justify the behaviour and the cruelty to the horse, but it makes it understandable, which is part of the point of bounded empathy. Despite Seedy Sam's harsh treatment, he is not fully to blame for his desperation. He exemplifies the fact that balancing human and animal welfare is not simple, though the animal is usually the part to be neglected in an either-or situation.

Another example of bounded empathy is Joe the young groom and his ignorance. Sometimes people simply do not know enough about a species, or about an individual animal, to make sure it is given the best treatment, a point Nussbaum also raises: 'we are relatively ignorant of what a good life for each sort of animal is'.[39] Ignorance can be prevented by learning and implementing essential knowledge into education, though mistakes are bound to be made, as Joe exemplifies. He is a trainee stable boy, not yet comfortable with the tasks he performs or the animals he is around, but 'quick, and willing, and kind-hearted', all positive words describing him to create a positive tone (58). His surname, Green, alludes to something new and fresh, which is suitable for 'a boy who knew nothing', as well as being a potential for growth (60). When his inexperience causes direct harm to Beauty, there is no ground for disliking him, for Beauty the narrator is not angry at him either, 'he knew very little … but I am sure he did the very best he knew' (62). This is a complex example, because the protagonist becomes ill as a result of Joe not knowing the correct measures to take after the incident of running to the doctor. The nature of Beauty's narration constructs empathy for him who is pained by the lack of proper care after extensive exercise. His gentle manner and storytelling make readers worry about him and his friends' wellbeing, and sympathy is present. Yet despite his mistake, Joe is not subjected to reproach from Beauty, as his intentions were good. The text suggests bounded empathy with the boy, despite him making a near-fatal mistake, by stating that Joe is 'broken-hearted', not eating, not smiling, and he 'knows it was all his fault', he had simply not been taught the right thing to do in this circumstance (64). Once Joe grows up, the horses he cares for are treated better as a result of his initial fault, and he is reunited with Beauty in the end of the book. Joe is a model for ignorance that can be prevented by thorough teaching and personal awareness of responsibility when dealing with live creatures. By introducing a character with a major fault such as ignorance, the text acknowledges that mistakes happen, but they can result in something positive.

Bounded strategic empathy in *War Horse* comes in the form of attention to the individuality of the citizens in the different countries, Britain, France, and Germany, offering a perspective of the nationalities without stereotyping them. Reading from Joey's perspective of life in England, there is a pre-determined empathy for the British and the Allies during WWI. This empathy, however, interchanges once Joey is on the German side, depicting the Allies' enemy in a new light. The text is littered with examples of good and bad men of Britain, like Captain James Nicholls and Corporal Samuel Perkins, as well as of Germany, like most of the

[39] Nussbaum, "The Moral Status of Animals," B6-B8.

initial Germans Joey meets, then later 'a different breed of men', grave from the dark turn the war takes (Morpurgo 92). The story starts off on the British side, but once Joey is transported to France and comes in contact with the French and Germans, they become individual characters who deviate from the stereotypical nationalities.

Friedrich, one of the German soldiers, is a pacifist forced to fight in the war, a detail that is working against the traditional conception of Germans as all enemies and in favour of the war. He is described as a 'kind and gentle man whose whole nature cried out against fighting a war', which is the text constructing him as a person to feel with, because he wants peace and he cares for others' wellbeing (108). Joey tells that Friedrich was called mad by the other soldiers, yet the text does not ridicule him along with the soldiers' own remarks against him: it allows an outsider, an invisible, to be seen and heard instead. Friedrich is the one to protest against the 'too heavy' carts Joey and Topthorn have to pull, while the other soldiers only laugh at him, not doing anything to alleviate the weight despite it probably being more efficient to do so (107). As opposed to his nickname, Friedrich is the one to voice the illogic of WWI, '"I am the only sane man in the regiment … They fight a war and they don't know what for. Isn't that crazy?"' (108). He continues by saying that the horses are 'the only rational creatures' he's met during the war, 'and like me the only reason you're here is because you were brought here' (108-9). The use of the concepts 'madness' and 'rationality' are usually considered as opposites, and humans normally claim to be the rational creatures. In the context of *War Horse* and WWI though, the madman is the sane person and the horses the rational, which emphasises how the war shocked the world. The horse narrator constructs ambassadorial empathy on behalf of Joey and his kind, and thus bounded empathy is present for the human Friedrich because he is one who shows compassion for the horses, an individual who conforms to general contemporary views of WWI as nothing but a disaster costing millions of lives. In the early twentieth century it was a proud thing to go to war, but this view has changed, as *War Horse* exemplifies.[40]

Bounded strategic empathy is the type of empathy that connects with other people, perhaps those of a different social status or a different nationality, but they still share fundamental values. In *Black Beauty*, it is the type of empathy that works to de-vilify the human characters Seedy Sam and Joe Green. Their actions harmed horses, but it is not easy to blame them when understanding their situations. As demonstrated by Keen, constructed empathy on behalf of a social class is common, which is also connected to educational or intellectual levels,

[40] Rosemary Ross Johnston and Lissa Paul, "Approaching War: Australian and Canadian Children's Culture and the First World War," *Childhood in the Past: An International Journal* 7, no. 1 (2014), 4.

such as it is in Sewell's novel. In *War Horse*, bounded empathy erases stereotypical characteristics of German soldiers, particularly in the case of Friedrich. Empathy is utilised to show his personality and individuality, which is not normally done when portraying Germans in WWI. Bounded empathy for Friedrich is a kind of simulation, as Oatley considers it, of compassionate consideration of people of other countries, despite them once belonging to a nation that has been construed as the enemy. Application of such bounded empathy would be to think of a person as an individual, with a unique situation they may not be blamed for until sufficient evidence is found.

**Broadcast Strategic Empathy**

Broadcast strategic empathy 'calls upon every reader to feel with members of a group, by emphasising our common vulnerabilities and hopes through universalizing representations.'[41] This is not unlike bounded, but it aims further to evoke 'compassion for universal objects of concern, like infants and victims of disaster', as well as transcending time and space to appeal to generations after original publication.[42] It also has an aspect of the ambassadorial empathy, exemplified by *Black Beauty*'s then contemporary and immediate horse welfare appeal, and the more general appeal for kindness it has today. An example of broadcast empathy is Hardy's literary empathy with a trilobite fossil in *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (1873), evoking a 'salutary awareness of humanity's insignificance in the universe.'[43] The fossil had a life and a body at a point in time, reminding Knight, the character in the book, that he and his fellow humans are at the mercy of the universe and its nature. In other words, broadcast empathy can be the overarching message promoting awareness of humane practices in the case of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*. Both novels have universal lessons to teach, stressing the necessity to consider people of all cultures and languages, as well as animals, as worthy subjects of understanding and compassionate consideration.

One of the main things *Black Beauty* did as a literary text in the nineteenth century was spread knowledge of horses in the attempt to make their lives universally better, but it was dependent on a receptive audience that could apply the advice given by a fictional horse. Such advice includes thinking critically about aspects such as horse gear and if or why it is necessary to use it, for example bits or blinkers. It leads to the seeking of more information. This spread continues today, and even though the text is very specific to the Victorian context and requires

[41] Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1291.
[42] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 365, 371.
[43] Keen, "Empathetic Hardy," 381.

connection to a subject far in the past, it continues to be an exercise of empathy that one can apply liberally. The information Beauty and his equine friends are giving are of broadcast nature in the sense that it is supposed to encompass the wellbeing of all horses and encourage humans in any situation to heed the information.

The broadcast strategy works in favour of kindness for everyone. When John Manly says, 'with cruelty and oppression, it is everybody's business to interfere when they see it', he refers to cruelty of horses in the context, but it can also mean cruelty to fellow humans (Sewell 67). This is still a highly relevant quotation today, nearly a century and a half after the original publication of *Black Beauty*, because cruelty and oppression are still present in many respects. This was briefly touched upon in Chapter 1 when the contemporary status of the novel is considered. Hall, writing on horse welfare in 2015, wonders whether people 'pause to think about life from the horse's point of view' in the ways horses are used by humans today, because the priority is still man first and animal second.[44] This is unlikely to change, but *Black Beauty* can teach readers valuable lessons in empathetic consideration nonetheless.

Morpurgo often writes about the World Wars, highly emotional topics that are fairly recent history. They were wars that negatively affected millions of people worldwide, which fostered contempt between opposing sides. Literature has the potential to soften this contempt and attempt to make one part understand and perhaps feel with the other part. *War Horse* has several moments where two groups meet to compare them, such as when the French farmer sells Joey to Albert: '"We have much in common you and I. I am French and you are Tommy. True, I am old and you are young. But we share a love for this horse, do we not? … you are a farmer, like I am"' (Morpurgo 177-78). Joey is the constant connection between the various human characters, who are more similar than different. Even Captain Stewart of the British side admits that the 'Germans love their horses every bit as much' as the Brits do, comforting Trooper Warren as well as the reader that Joey and Topthorn, now taken by the Germans, will be fine (68). A German veterinarian adds to this comparison of peoples, saying that the nations '"are the same on both sides, once we start something we seem to have to prove a point and that takes time and lives"' (73). Joey spends time with soldiers from both warring sides, and notes that despite the men wearing different uniforms and helmets, they have 'the same grey faces', indicating that no one side wants to be at war more than the other (76). He is treated kindly by the Germans and the French civilians as by the Brits, his home simply happens to be with Albert in England.

[44] Hall, *Horse Welfare,* 135.

Thanks to Joey's nature as a horse, he moves between the different nationalities. This makes him observant, a trait that is sought after, particularly by Nussbaum, because it can help make the invisible visible, creating the potential for alleviation of suffering. Not only is he and his kind becoming visible, but soldiers too are seen, not as one unit or army, but as individuals with dreams and ambitions, exemplified by characters like Trooper Warren and Friedrich. Joey notes that soldiers, civilians, and horses alike suffered in the war and the text consequently works towards an empathetic outlook for those who are subjected to unpleasant conditions of the war. First, he focuses on the horses:

> Each night we spent in the lines up to our hocks in freezing mud, in conditions far worse than that first winter of the war when Topthorn and I had been cavalry horses. Then each horse had had a trooper who did all he could to care for us and comfort us, but now the efficiency of the gun was the first priority and we came a very poor second (100-1).

The horses have been reduced to machines pulling the big guns, because the war is no longer in the naïve phase as it was when they were cavalry horses. Now it is in a state of total destruction, hardly providing food or shelter, and the horses are constantly cold and sore. Yet as the paragraph goes on, sympathy is spreading from the horses to include the soldiers:

> The gunners themselves were grey in the face with exhaustion and hunger. Survival was all that mattered to them now. …
>
> The effects of continual exposure, under-feeding and hard work were now apparent in all of us. … there was not a horse in the team that was not walking lame. The vets treated us as best they could, and even the most hard-hearted of the gunners seemed disturbed as our condition worsened, but there was nothing anyone could do until the mud disappeared (101).

The men are also living on short rations and exposure to the weather, and they do not have excess energy or the right means to help themselves or the horses. This kind of observation demonstrates what Joey is doing in the whole book – he is aware of others around him, of their joys, pains, and struggles. Broadcast strategic empathy emphasises such awareness, because it is important to a society where people care for each other. Without observation and awareness, it is impossible to help others.

Ultimately, the important features to learn from *War Horse* is observation and empathy. Seeing the world from Joey's perspective, and experiencing how he relates to those around him, the text alludes to the millions of opinions and personalities in the world that all deserve reflection. *War Horse* is particularly relevant to Europe, but its essence of encouraging empathy for all sides involved remains universal. A century has passed since the end of the war, and national leaders worldwide generally work in diplomatic ways to prevent future armed conflicts, especially those of such ferocious nature as the ones seen in the twentieth century. When successful, broadcast strategic empathy extends beyond a specific moment in time and appeals to a wider audience, which is the case for *Black Beauty* and *War Horse.* Their messages of kindness carry on today, though the context for horses has changed. As such, broadcast empathy is a kind of sharing of compassion, which is what Nussbaum seeks.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has demonstrated how the horse narration works towards advocating certain types of empathy for various groups in society, not just horses. It shows that literature has a potential for influence through empathy, which can open up to understanding a person's situation. In theory, Nussbaum thus has a good argument in advocating for the inclusion of suitable literature in a curriculum for people to develop more compassion for others. Not only do Beauty and Joey encourage empathy for horses, but also for the good people who take care of the animals in the best possible way. It is a double victory for the animal narrator and its human author.

Keen is more reserved about the claims that novel reading leads to altruistic behaviour, as she finds 'the case for altruism stemming from novel reading inconclusive at best and nearly always exaggerated in favour of beneficial effects of novel reading', because the link between reading literature and behaving altruistically is not proved to a satisfactory degree.[45] There is no doubt that there are narrative techniques and devices that allow textual empathy, but whether affect is a result of such empathy is a question to consider. An aspect of this is the doubt that a reader with little initial empathy for others is likely to then suddenly feel strong empathy for literary characters, let alone act on it. Perhaps empathetic literature 'can only enhance empathy already present in a person.'[46] More empirical research on empathy is therefore needed before any certain conclusions are drawn.

[45] Keen, *Empathy and the Novel,* vii.; Keen, "Narrative Empathy," 1285.
[46] Keen, *Empathy and the Novel,* 12.

When it comes to literature, however, there is no strict necessity for scientific support, because as Hardy also found out, observation is sometimes enough to understand correlations of social behaviour. By looking at historical reception and cultural context, this thesis has already pointed to the potential influence that animal narrators have in society. Chapter 1 demonstrates the decrease in the use of the bearing-rein after the publication of *Black Beauty*, which is exemplified by two instances in particular. One example is from Anna Sewell's own funeral, where the horses pulling the casket were using bearing-reins before her mother Mary Sewell ordered them removed.[47] The other example is found in the newspaper entry about the young girl who refused to ride in the carriage when the bearing-reins were in use.[48] These are pieces of evidence that support the belief that novel-reading leads to empathy, and to altruism. In general, the use of the bearing-rein decreased in numbers, at least partly thanks to *Black Beauty.* Literature is unlikely to be the only factor involved in such statistics, but the decrease may have been slower without the inspiration of the novel.

These examples suggest that the ambassadorial strategic empathy worked, because Beauty and Ginger managed to convince readers that the bearing-rein was a painful device and that they were better without it. If this strategy is further successful, it should also lead to less punishment of horses, and to making sure they have the right conditions in their stalls as much as possible, and perhaps with freedom to move about in a field once in a while. The narrative suggestions are many, they just have to be acted out. Keen's strategic empathies, as demonstrated in *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*, open up for the possibility of contemplating and challenging attitudes regarding horses and the use and treatment of them, of other animals, and of humans that are in difficult situations. Overall, these strategies are encouraging an audience towards thinking more empathetically, perhaps compassionately, and making choices based on what is beneficial for the common good. It may not be successful, but if the two novels have a chance of influencing a reader's attitude towards animals, they should undoubtedly be included in the literary canon where they can further induce empathy.

[47] Chitty, *Anna Sewell,* 244.
[48] Gibbs, "The Bearing-Rein (Letter to the Editor)," 4.

## Conclusion

As this thesis demonstrates, equine narrators offer new perspectives on life as a flesh-and-blood being. Most pieces of literature offer variations on life as a human, but the horse narrators take imagination one step further, promoting an awareness of how human conduct influences nonhuman beings. Animal literature encourages empathy for the species represented in selected texts, which can inspire attitudes of welfare towards animals and other neglected groups of literary narrators and characters. The horse narrators that are analysed in this thesis are crucial to the way *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* are read, and they influence readers to interpret elements in the story as if seen from a real horse's perspective.

Chapter 1 'History, Reception, and Genre' first gave an overview of how animals were perceived up until the nineteenth century, to understand why the people thought of nonhuman beings as simple creatures meant for human use. By placing the novels in context, it is possible to understand circumstances that may have led to their creation, what they as literature and cultural commentary aim to achieve, how they were received by readers, and what kind of impact they had. I argued that they were both written to inform readers about the status of horses in Sewell and Morpurgo's respective contexts. *Black Beauty* is a novel that has spurred change in human treatment of horses, specifically stating that the bearing-rein has no value besides vanity. As the newspaper entries quoted in the chapter suggest, Beauty urged Victorians to properly see horses, as well as surprising readers with the novel's accuracy. Sewell's book became a huge success and inspired other animal narratives such as Morpurgo's. A century after Sewell, he teaches readers about the crucial role of horses in WWI, and thus opens up for a new understanding of the importance of animals in war, a topic that has otherwise not been acknowledged to a significant degree. His welfare message is not as immediate as is Sewell's, but it is nonetheless important to realise how humans continue to subject animals in new ways to human purposes, despite technology replacing working animals.

Chapter 2 'From the Horse's Mouth' discussed the narrative situations of the two novels, that I argue are their most unique characteristics. There I established how the narratives are set up, and how the voices of the horse protagonists shape the reading experience. This chapter analysed two main literary devices in relation to the narration of *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*: focalisation and defamiliarisation. Mieke Bal's narratological theory of narrator and focaliser was applied to the texts in order to determine how they present subjective and unique horse-sense from the equine characters. We learn that there are layers of narration: Old Beauty and

Old Joey are the primary narrators, relating their lives from a young age to adulthood. The selves they are telling about are the focalisers on the story-level. I also argue, along with Bal and Phelan, that the narrators are focalisers at the same time, termed narrator-focaliser, because they too are subjective in their storytelling. Then there is embedded narration, allowing a second-level narrator-focaliser, such as Ginger, who relates her own metanarrative (narrative-within-narrative) about how her life experience has turned her into the feisty mare. Her younger self is thus the focaliser in this metanarrative, and it is her point of view that presents the humans who handled her. *War Horse* follows a similar pattern, though it does not have the variety of equine voices as *Black Beauty* does, because Joey is the only horse speaking. The text displays his thoughts and relay human dialogue, adding context to his situation that he is otherwise unaware of. The two horse stories are entertaining at the same time as they speak out for the voiceless, giving horses agency to represent their real-life equivalents.

Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarisation technique is the focus of the second part of Chapter 2, because it is caused by the horse narrators. Defamiliarisation makes the stories stand out: unusual perspectives offering new interpretations of otherwise common objectives. This technique takes the everyday habitual details and turn them into something new, making the reader engage with the details from a new angle. One of the examples given in the chapter is the use of the bit, the part of the bridle going into the horse's mouth. Though it is used as an example of the subjective nature of the narrator-focaliser, it also demonstrates defamiliarisation, because the horse narrators force the reader to view a common object in a new way. A human narrator may not have lingered on the bit more than necessary, but the horses give extensive comments on the pieces of metal, challenging readers to imagine having such an object in one's mouth. The negative approach to the bit catches readers off-guard, because they may not have questioned the object before, other than thinking it necessary to control a horse. Defamiliarisation questions the familiar and is particularly useful to make readers rethink human attitudes. In order for such attitudes to be challenged and possibly changed, another factor is necessary to push readers to act: empathy.

Chapter 3 'Narrative Imagination and Narrative Empathy' discussed literature and empathy in relation to the narrative situations of novels. The horse narratives are angled in such a way that the text encourages empathy with the horses, leading to sympathy and suggesting actions to take in real-life to prevent suffering. Two main scholars are cited in this context, Martha Nussbaum and Suzanne Keen. Nussbaum believes in the power of narrative imagination to cultivate altruistic citizens and emphasises the need for literature in educational curricula. Keen turns to cognitive literary studies, researching links between novel-reading and altruism.

Nussbaum's narrative imagination leads to what Keen terms narrative empathy, because allowing oneself to imagine life as equine protagonists, one steps into their hooves, adopting their perspectives and feelings towards elements surrounding them. Keen identifies three different ways in which a literary text induces empathy, under the umbrella term strategic empathy: bounded, ambassadorial, and broadcast strategic empathies. I identify these in *Black Beauty* and *War Horse*, texts functioning in different ways to frame emotion for selected characters. The prominent ambassadorial empathy advocates horses, the bounded empathy advocates various humans, and the broadcast empathy takes on a universal empathy that extends across species and across time and space. These all make the novels into exercises in empathy, with the potential of making readers better and more moral towards animals and other humans.

Narrative empathy not only has potential but is also proven to be practically effective. This is demonstrated in Chapter 1, where numerous newspaper entries spoke of the surge copies and editions of *Black Beauty* reaching far and wide into the US as well as the UK. It had a direct impact on the use of the bearing-rein, physical evidence of the restraint the horse focalisers are speaking against in this literary text. A century and more later, *War Horse* influences the perception of animals in war, inspiring new research and museum exhibitions that expands general knowledge and interest in the nonhuman effort that was so crucial to an otherwise well-known war. The novels both inspire ways of thinking about horses that may not be considered unless the animal narrators are taken into account.

The variety of approaches and devices discussed in this thesis, such as historical reader reception, narratology, defamiliarisation, and empathy, are all connected, as demonstrated by the different chapters. While an interdisciplinary approach may prevent a project from going more in depth, more is gained by joining the fields, as the various ways of thinking can inspire new ideas and add new knowledge to an existing field. Animal studies has grown in the past decades, due to its combination with literature and other fields. Literary animal studies has been particularly useful for interpreting the novels in terms of animal welfare, allowing the animal to be the primary object of study. Fictional texts provide imaginative and empathetic approaches to animals that is difficult to gain through nonfictional descriptive works without embellishment. At the same time, texts have to draw on animal studies and other fields, as animals are not simply literary, but drawn from physical real-life beings, which is why realistic animal fiction is more suitable to advocate animal welfare than fiction in which animals walk and talk like humans. Animal studies add an awareness of animals to novel-reading which

demonstrates the value of literature, a field that is sometimes undervalued in an era where technology and science focus on facts and empirical results.

**Increasing Awareness and Interest in Literary Animals**

Animals in literature are becoming more emphasised and praised. The British Library held an exhibition from November 2018 to March 2019 named 'Cats on the Page', displaying numerous literary works with cats as prominent characters, such as the well-known Cheshire cat from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), Dr. Seuss' *The Cat in the Hat* (1957), Judith Kerr's *Mog the Forgetful Cat* (1970), as well as more modern characters, like Nana from Hiro Arikawa's *The Travelling Cat Chronicles* (2012). The exhibition did not explicitly inform about feline welfare, but thinking about literary animals can lead to thinking about them in real life and to increased consideration of our fellow beings. A library and institutions like it broaden people's minds and raise awareness for literature that is out of the ordinary, awakening interest in books on display, and that in turn can have a positive effect on attitudes to animals overall. A similar exhibition of literary horses or horse narrators would be suitable, in which Beauty and Joey are joined by other equines like Tolstoy's Kholstomer, Mitchell's Thowra, Adams' Traveller, and Hawkes' Sweet William. More modern narratives should be mentioned as well, such as Spirit, the protagonist from DreamWorks' 2002 movie *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron*. His voice narrates the whole movie about his life as a mustang in America's Wild West, advocating for more consideration of wild horses as well as for Native Americans.

Sewell and Morpurgo are ambassadors for the working horses and ponies who are subject to the dominion of humans. In Sewell's time, working horses were everywhere, many in bad conditions and she must have felt it was an urgent matter for the public to care about. Working horses are now rare in most Western countries, but practices still linger in the form of romanticised attitude to cab horses, exemplified by the existence of cab horses in large cities such as New York, as pointed out in Chapter 1 when discussing the horse novels in modern context. Otherwise the use of horses is now referred to as pastime activities, which is reflected in the numerous pony club books children read, especially if they are interested in equines.

According to equine enthusiast Hall, there is still a long way to go in terms of how humans treat horses. Abuse of horses is difficult to avoid, as various charities are evidence of, notably World Horse Welfare and The British Horse Society in the UK. Hall suggests that both *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* had an impact in the reports of suffering horses, and though some

people have good intentions, they are 'not equipped to look after horses.'[1] Even though horse ownership still symbolise wealth in most cases, the horse itself can be cheap compared to everything else that follows horse-ownership. The stabling of the horse, veterinary bills, food, regular treatment of hooves by farriers, and necessary gear are all expensive factors not all horse owners have sufficient economy for, yet some have horses regardless. This lack of proper consideration of the responsibility of animal ownership leads to neglect and suffering of the animal. This is the case for other domestic animals as well, especially cats and dogs. With the help of animal narrators, issues like these should be included in educational curricula.

**Further Research**

A more comprehensive study of animal narrators would be beneficial for finding common features that are necessary when writing from an animal's perspective. Canine and feline narrators would be a point of departure, as well as other animals that could tell us something about life as nonhuman beings distanced from domestic life, such as Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1998), a novel from the perspective of elephants.

The link between literary animals and children can be explored further, as a way to identify more features that are beneficial in educating kids to be respectful towards other species. It would be helpful to discuss in more detail why adults in general do not read books from an animal perspective, why a reader turns away from literary animals once they become adults, and what it is that fails to intrigue them.

In the field of cognitive literary studies, it would be interesting to conduct extensive tests studying the potentiality of animal narrators to advocate change and altruism in readers towards animals. Animal stories are often dismissed as innocent children's literature or unworthy fantasy, but this thesis has shown that it is time to take animal narrators more seriously in terms of what they can offer society. The discussions about *Black Beauty* and *War Horse* show that literature can and does have an impact on animal welfare. The positive outcomes of literature must be highlighted even more than it is today, especially those advocating for animals and other groups we urgently need to understand and respect to a higher degree.

[1] Hall, *Horse Welfare,* 7-8.

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