

## Of Mice and Women:

The Position of Women and Non-Human Animals in Wilkie Collins' *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White*

OF MICE AND WOMEN: THE POSITION OF WOMEN AND NON-HUMAN ANIMALS IN  
WILKIE COLLINS' *HEART AND SCIENCE* AND *THE WOMAN IN WHITE*

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## Abstract

Two of Wilkie Collins' sensation novels, *The Woman in White* (1890-91) and *Heart and Science* (1882-83), represent women and non-human animals as occupying comparable cultural positions of vulnerability in Victorian society. This alignment between women and animals became particularly apparent in the emerging debates over the scientific practice of vivisection in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The first chapter of this thesis examines the antivivisection movement which protested strongly against the practice of vivisection on animals and came to be led primarily by women. This chapter's focus is on the reasons behind women's passionate identification with non-human animals subject to cruel and painful experiment and how this reflected both groups' vulnerable and subordinate position in society. The second chapter analyzes Collins' own contribution to the antivivisection campaign in his polemic *Heart and Science*. This novel demonstrates the cruelty of the vivisector in Collins' villain, Dr. Benjulia, but also, the strength and value of instinct and emotion as forms of knowledge which are typically feminized and devalued. Collins ultimately recommends a type of medical care that is attentive to both the body and the mind rather than separating them into binary structures. Lastly, the third chapter examines *The Woman in White*, which was published before the vivisection controversy yet still demonstrates women's alignment with animals particularly in their relationships with the two different male villains Count Fosco and Sir Percival. This novel represents women resisting these men's attempts to treat them like inferior animals and instead asserting their own authority as capable beings. By doing so, Collins reveals not only the constructed ideals of superiority and inferiority in society but also the extreme vulnerability of those labeled 'inferior' beings.

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## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	page 1
Chapter 1: Of Victims and Vivisection.....	page 5
The Position of Animals and Women in Victorian Society.....	page 7
Theorizing the Connection between Women & Animals.....	page 12
The Influence of Darwin.....	page 21
Chapter 2: Of Dogs and Doctors.....	page 29
Dr. Benjulia: The Vivisecting Villain and His Limited Authority.....	page 32
Zo: The Triumph of Emotion.....	page 38
Ovid Vere: Modeling Good Doctors and Good Men.....	page 41
Chapter 3: Of Cockatoos and Counts.....	page 49
The Count as Villain.....	page 52
Female Resistance: Laura and Marian.....	page 67A
Afterword.....	page 99
Works Cited.....	page 102

## List of Illustrations

Figure 1: “Awful Apparition”.....	page 49
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## List of Abbreviations

<i>WinW</i> .....	<i>The Woman in White</i>
<i>HS</i> .....	<i>Heart and Science</i>
<i>BH</i> .....	<i>Bleak Houses</i>
<i>QVF</i> .....	<i>Queer Victorian Families: Curious Relations in Literature</i>
<i>WC</i> .....	<i>Wilke Collins: Authors in Context</i>
<i>DATN</i> .....	<i>Darwin and the Novelists</i>

### Introduction:

In medical circles during the Victorian era, women were not only patients to be treated, but also live bodies on which doctors could perform experiments and studies. With the advancements being made in both science and medicine, there developed an “eagerness to open up the woman and see deeply into the secrets of her body” (Showalter 128). A female doctor of the time, Anna Kingsford, remarked how lower-class women were particularly targeted for this invasion and “thus classed with animals as fitting subjects for painful experiment” (Lansbury quoting Kingsford “Gynaecology” 415). Yet other nineteenth-century writers as well as recent scholars note that Victorian women of all classes tended to be aligned, to a greater extent than their male counterparts, with animal or corporal being. Both groups were subject to “painful experiment,” legally exposed to the cruelty of men, and treated as inferior beings. This thesis will examine the comparable cultural positioning of women and non-human animals in two of Wilkie Collins’ sensation novels, *The Woman in White* (1859-1860) and *Heart and Science* (1882-1883), focusing on how these texts reflect a relationship between these two groups in terms of their status and treatment in an increasingly scientific society. I will pursue this argument primarily through close textual analyses but also by establishing in my first chapter the significant historical context of the antivivisection movement in the late nineteenth century. Vivisection—understood as the “cutting or dissecting some part of a living organism” (“Vivisection”)—was becoming a popular scientific practice in the late Victorian era. The antivivisection movement reacted to this scientific practice on non-human animals such as dogs, cats, or monkeys and its proponents argued against the ethics and utility of such a practice. Notably, these protests came to be occupied primarily by women and their role in the

antivivisection movement functioned to exemplify the connection between them and animals against men who ruled over and mistreated both groups. In this thesis, however, I will go beyond the literal dissection of the practice of vivisection and consider a number of forms of experimental practice on living beings, employing vivisection as a kind of metaphor for the extreme vulnerability of women and animals to men's control and cruelty.

My first chapter will introduce in further detail the context of antivivisectionism, focusing not on the exact achievements and legislation coming out of this movement, but rather, its revelation of the inferior position and cruel treatment of women and animals in nineteenth century English society. This thesis will look not just into the vivisection debate but also explore the reasons behind the alignment of women and animals which pervaded society. I will present theories from modern and Victorian scholars who have examined antivivisectionism as well as the connection between women and animals more generally. These theories range from the questioning of England's claims to be 'civilized' to a close examination of Charles Darwin's newly emerging theories of evolution and humanity's place in the natural world. While some theorists such as Frances Power Cobbe see women as more closely connected to animals than others, the range of theories in scholarship is significant in foregrounding Collins' exploration of the relationship between women and animals and how he critiques constructions of gendered knowledge by demonstrating the value of typically feminized instinct and impulses.

The second chapter presented here will analyze Collins' antivivisectionist polemic *Heart and Science*. This novel, despite its later publication, will be examined first primarily because of its clear engagement with the antivivisection movement unfolding at the time. Collins makes explicit and obvious comparisons between the animal subjects being cut into inside his villain's, Dr. Benjulia's, laboratory and the helplessly ill heroine Carmina. Most critics recognize that by



doing so, Collins regurgitates the popular concerns of antivivisectionists.<sup>1</sup> Part of Collins' project, however, is also to use the genre of sensation that plays on the nerves and emotions of its readers to challenge scientific indifference and emphasize the importance and value of intuitive response and emotional response. Through his representation of young Zoe and caring doctor Ovid Vere, Collins seeks to recuperate methods of knowledge typically attributed to feminine or animal being while also collapsing the titular binary between 'heart' and 'science.' The ability to feel emotion, to demonstrate embodied care, and to follow one's impulses even if they are not logical combine to form Collins' vision of the proper doctor and proper man who treats his fellow beings appropriately.<sup>2</sup>

*The Woman in White*—the focus of the third chapter—suggests the cultural equation of women and animals both prefigures and extends beyond the issue of vivisection into a wider cultural discourse of constructed hierarchies. Published before *Heart and Science*, Collins' *Woman in White* not only complicates the alignment between women and animals through its pet-loving villain, but also demonstrates how women came to be equated with animals not as fellow beings but as objects of manipulation and experimentation for men.<sup>3</sup> While the vivisection controversy allowed women and men to conceptualize and focus their arguments through one particular issue, Collins' earlier discourse of the connection between women and animals in *Woman in White* does not conform to the simple or obvious pattern of male 'vivisector' or abuser who brutalizes a helpless female victim. Instead, male villains appear benevolent and sympathetic while female victims resist and subverted expected submissive behaviour, leading to

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<sup>1</sup> See Steve Farmer and Jessica Straley.

<sup>2</sup> Collins' analysis of the proper masculine figure reflects his own complex, potentially biased and even implicated position as male writer who comments on women's vulnerabilities. He thus attempts to demonstrate what he thinks his own role in society should be as a white, authoritative male.

<sup>3</sup> Through my non-chronological analysis, I have organized this thesis to examine second the *cause* of the vivisection movement—the troubling alignment of women and animals in Victorian society—and first its effects (the vivisection controversy).

a more complex portrayal of gender relations. The female characters of Laura and Marian resist their animalistic treatment at the hands of the brutish Sir Percival and the cunningly sympathetic Count Fosco, refusing to be easily devalued or defined as animals. While critics of *The Woman in White* typically read this novel as an exposure of the unspoken marital violence in Victorian upper-class homes, this thesis will draw on this criticism to suggest that Collins not only exposes marital violence but also the way Victorian society places value in certain beings over or at the expense of others.<sup>4</sup> By first examining the historical context of the antivivisection movement and reading that context into Collins' novels, readers can see the importance of the social critiques presented in the sensation novels for combatting insidious constructions of superiority and inferiority.

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<sup>4</sup> For this type of reading of the novel, see Lisa Surridge, Marlene Tromp, and Suzanne Rintoul.

## Chapter 1: Of Victims and Vivisection: Theories of Antivivisection and the Influence of Darwin on the Connection between Women and Animals

In 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published her revolutionary tract *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in which she called for improved female education while creating an analogy between women's current state and that of a domestic pet. She not only calls a wife's affection for her husband "spaniel-like" (149) and "cattish" (184), but also claims that women are "confined then in cages like the feathered race, [in which] they have nothing to do but plume themselves" (60). Wollstonecraft's analogy foreshadowed the Victorian convergence of the rights movements for women and animals, connected in the antivivisectionist controversy. Public discourse during this time was preoccupied with the question of the vulnerability of women and animals. According to middle-class ideology, women were to please men, remain in the home, and become dutiful wives and mothers; nonetheless, they were beginning to demand greater legal and social independence across classes particularly in marriage. Animals' position also shifted as they became increasingly valued as household pets and thus subservient members of the family, binding them closer to humanity while simultaneously reinforcing their status as lesser. These two issues converged in the antivivisection debate which permeated many aspects of English life, taking place from the mid-1870s to mid-1880s and filling the newspapers, judicial courts and Parliamentary discussion (Pykett WC 187). Scientific men primarily occupied the side for vivisection whereas women actively campaigning for the better treatment of animals took top positions in antivivisection leagues (Buettinger 862). The antivivisection movement symbolized the growing recognition of women's comparable status to animals in society and the similar cruelty with which men treated both groups. In this chapter, I will engage with scholars who have attempted to answer why the antivivisectionist debates were so hotly protested by women

and how these theories relate to the connection between women and animals in two of Collins' novels, *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White*. Critics from the Victorian era to the present day call attention to subordination of animals, who are cultivated and trained to serve their masters, and their comparable social and legal position to women in society.<sup>5</sup> Prior to the flourishing of the vivisection debates, women's social and legal position was one that limited, exposed, and rendered women vulnerable to the abuse of men (as will be shown in Collins' *The Woman in White*). The theories of women's involvement in the antivivisection movement pick up on some of these issues and range from the question of scientific progress to the victimization of women and animals by men, before addressing the influential work of Charles Darwin.

Critics such as Gillian Beer and George Levine acknowledge that Darwin, particularly in *The Descent of Man*, naturalized patriarchy by depicting women and animals as members of the lower orders who proved more closely associated with emotion and intuition than with the highly prized and supposedly masculine trait of reason and logic. I will then refer to Beer's, Levine's and Elizabeth Grosz's focus on his more subversive texts such as *The Origin of the Species* and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, texts which actually destabilize cultural norms through their emphasis on fitness and unity among the natural world. These Darwinian works resonate with that of the pioneer and writer of sensation fiction, Wilkie Collins, who sought to reconnect his readers to the emotions and sensations of their bodies rather than rely solely on their rational minds through his subversive characters and suspenseful plots. Like Darwin, Collins offers to period debates an alternate way of viewing the world as one where emotion and instinct, typically considered the 'lower,' animalistic, and feminized methods of knowledge, are legitimately valuable. By establishing the conceptions espoused in Darwin's *Descent* which were then ratified by Victorian patriarchy, one can see how Collins' fiction, both

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<sup>5</sup> These critics include Frances Power Cobbe, Coral Lansbury, Lisa Surridge, Evelleen Richards, etc.

*Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White*, is responding to the gendered assumptions of the period and attempting to rid readers of these stereotypical and hierarchical assumptions. To do so, he creates sensational environments which challenge the purported binary between male logic and female emotion, demonstrating that men also utilize their instincts productively while simultaneously exemplifying that women are capable of also employing the ‘higher faculties.’

### The Position of Animals and Women in Victorian Society:

With the increase of science, the antivivisection debate, and the theories of Darwin, came the changing conception of the place of animals in society which led to a complex understanding of the connections between women and animals. The term ‘animal’ was understood as any “organized body endowed with sensation” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* qtd. in Ritvo 12) and yet despite humanity’s growing recognition of their own closeness to the species, animals came to be “significant primarily as the objects of human manipulation” (Ritvo 2). Harriet Ritvo contends that animals were stripped of agency by being relegated to subjects of human control rather than fellow beings (6). Humanity was positioned at the “apex” of divine creation while animals occupied an inferior status, valued as beasts of burden or entertainment (14-15). Victorians also differentiated between domestic and wild animals: “The best animals were those that displayed the qualities of an industrious, docile, and willing human servant; the worst not only declined to serve, but dared to challenge human supremacy” (17). Prized as one of the “best” animals, the dog “epitomized the appropriate relationship between masters and subordinates” because it “understood and accepted its position so thoroughly that it did not resist punishment” (21). The dog and the other ‘good’ animals, through their acceptance of their inferiority, allowed their

masters to provide and rule over them with a display of relative benevolence and thus affirm that these masters were indeed deserving of their dominance. Monica Flegel writes how Victorians' attachment to their pets translated into fiction and served to reflect truths of society:

As objects of emotional investment through which Victorians demonstrated proper affection, stewardship, conspicuous consumption, and domesticity, and as subjects of power relations who demonstrate the contradictions apparent in the valuing of some creatures over others within a supposedly coherent narrative of 'kindness,' the animal in nineteenth-century domestic texts helped to define normative human relations. ('Pets and Domesticity' 6)

As I demonstrate in my following chapters on *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White*, the "normative human relations" enacted between humans and pets become especially representative of the relationships between men and women. Collins demonstrates how women are treated as pets both in the sense that men are able to physically punish them for disobedient behaviour as well as treat them as lesser beings in men's "supposed" kindness and 'protection' of them. In doing so, Collins reveals problematic and troubling labels of inferiority and superiority in Victorian society.

Just as animals were akin to both "domestic servants and labourers", they could also be related to the "exotic peoples" who were "subjugated in the course of the nineteenth century" (Ritvo 41).<sup>6</sup> These comparisons emphasize animals' subordinate and even 'Other' status in society. Both servants and foreign people were objectified by upper-class, white Victorian patriarchs and valued only for their usefulness to English society. Like "exotic" peoples, however, animals could also be wild, untamed, and uncontrollable. According to Ritvo, these animals were "vilified" (21) or "not even important to merit a moral judgement unless they somehow reflected human experience" (23). While domestic, the cat was troublesome in its

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<sup>6</sup> The class implications here are complex as genteel women too were aligned with animals. One could suggest that, even for women in upper-class households, this troubling alignment and treatment of women as inferior existed but was perhaps merely disguised. Suzanne Rintoul, Lisa Surridge and Marlene Tromp offer readings of the unspeakability of wife abuse in mid to upper-class homes.

independence and disobedience to its master (22-23).<sup>7</sup> Beasts of prey such as the tiger were “disturbing to contemplate” (25) because they “epitomized what man had to fear from the animal kingdom and restive human subordinates” (28). Animals were thus associated with the immorality of lower orders and vice versa, the lower-class would often be described as “savage,” “brutal,” “ferocious,” or “inhuman” (Turner 24). To distinguish themselves from these animals, humans must employ their “higher capacities” such as spirituality and discipline to raise themselves above animal, corporal being (24). In the difference between domestic and wild animals, one can see how animals could represent both the submission and defiance of the inferior orders or subjugated groups such as women or racialized groups as they reflected man’s dominance while simultaneously threatening the stability of this dominance through their capacity for subversion and ferocity. With the growing movement for women’s rights and the increase of divorce court journalism, women of all classes (but particularly the middle-classes) had the opportunity and means to expose and resist the cruelty of their husbands. In *Bleak Houses*, Lisa Surridge explains how emerging truths about wife abuse were so destabilizing to the justified practice of coverture that men often assumed that the charges of cruelty were fabricated, negating women’s authority and belittling their attempts to seek justice (140). While women could be subversive, their main role was to obey and submit. Due to this contrary nature attributed to women, animals’ particular relationship to women becomes further deserving of scrutiny.

Women, like animals, occupied a subordinate social and legal position in Victorian society and this position came increasingly up for debate towards mid to late century. Female character was inherently defined by a physiological basis—the capacity to reproduce rendered

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<sup>7</sup> Interestingly enough, due to their desire for independence, cats could be viewed as “the chosen allies of womankind” (23). Today, cats are the stereotypical pets of spinsters.

women “noncompetitive, nonaggressive, and self-sacrificing” which was the opposite of masculinity (Poovey 77, 80). Men’s biological view also negated women’s capacity for subversion or independence, suggesting that men wished to naturalize qualities they attributed to women themselves in order to justify patriarchy. The middle-class Victorian man was active in public life while the woman’s place was in the domestic sphere and her responsibilities included cultivating a peaceful, loving home for the husband to enjoy when he came home (Ruskin 661).<sup>8</sup> Mary Poovey says the ideology of the separate spheres “both generated and depended on an arrangement of social and property relations that positioned women as moral superiors *and* economic dependents...woman’s moral superiority was inextricably bound to their economic dependency” (52; original emphasis). Thus, marriage was the naturally suitable state for any woman not only because of her dependency but because it controlled female sexuality and the procreation of legitimate children gave her value (43). Marriage, however, afforded women very few rights as described in William Blackstone’s *Commentaries on the Laws of England*.<sup>9</sup> Married women existed in a state called coverture, meaning that “the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection, and *cover*, she performs every thing” (Blackstone 655; original emphasis). Coverture meant that men ruled over women as “masters” who are even given the right to dispense “moderate correction” to their wives (657) as well as control their income or property (Norton 662). Under coverture, a woman has “*no legal existence*” (661; original emphasis), a clearly prescribed social role from which she cannot extricate herself through divorce except in very rare and specific circumstances (662). In 1857, the first Matrimonial Causes Act was passed and claimed to reform the limited divorce

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<sup>8</sup> Yet as Elizabeth Langland argues, women as household managers actually resembled their entrepreneurial husbands: “The two were not separate but integrated and integral” (294).

<sup>9</sup> For more on Blackstone, see critics such as Michael Meehan and Teresa Michals.



procedures (Poovey 51); however, Poovey points out that the Act “did not actually remedy the anomalies it set out to address” and instead continued to propagate the idea of sexual difference as well as the sexual double standard between women and men (85). Surridge, on the other hand, argues the 1857 Act’s effect was “that middle-class assaults received the same level of publicity” as those of the lower-class (*BH* 8). In addition, important provisions were made for the separate, married woman who were given the right to retain their earnings if deserted and could act somewhat independently (Tromp 73). These changes meant women were afforded more rights if separated from their husbands; however, the law failed to redress the issue of men’s cruelty within a marriage and women’s limited freedom within it. The law did make divorce a more realistic option and thereby acknowledge that marriage even in upper-class households could be abusive or unhappy. The petition to change the laws reflected how women occupied a strictly defined and limited social and legal position in Victorian society. They were important for their virtue and moral presence in the home as well as their ability to procreate, yet they must be controlled by a marriage lest these traits become corrupted.

As the examples above make clear, the cultural impetus to align women and animals entailed complexities and contradictions. As domestic animals, to return to Wollstonecraft’s representation of women, they were to be submissive, subservient, pleasing and obedient to their superior master on whom they were completely dependent. Wild animals like beasts of prey, however, who defied the expected behaviour of subservient domesticated animals and threatened human control, resulted in their association with the brute and base tempers of the lower-classes. These animals then did not fit with the stereotypical qualities attributed to Victorian women as the moral centers of the home. If women were therefore ‘like’ animals, this comparison at once conformed to social norms (in their subservience to their masters) as well as significantly

subverted them (in their ability to deviate from stereotypical traits such as docility or passivity). Animals' relation to men and women's relation to men also operated on contradictions. Men both shared bonds of kinship with animals via shared ancestors while women too were fellow human beings and necessary partners for reproduction. Yet men also separated themselves from these groups through their legally and socially ratified dominion over them. Indeed, perhaps the most accurate way of conceptualizing the relationship between women and animals was through their contradictory relations to the men who labeled them as inferior.

### Theorizing the Connection between Women and Animals:

If the association between women and animals contributed to a gendered hierarchy in nineteenth-century England, women's alignment with animals during the time of antivivisectionism could be understood as a complex and multi-faceted one. In this section, I will examine the contradictions that troubled the Victorian ideal of England as a civilized, scientifically progressive society (see Turner and Ritvo). By examining these questions, I explore antivivisection's concerns about animal welfare but also their concerns of how an increasingly scientific and rational society as a whole valued and treated those who were considered the weakest members, an important subject in Collins' novels. From there, I will discuss conceptions of womanhood as inherently tied to the natural, ecological world and thus as also obligated to campaign on behalf of animals. Drawing on famous antivivisectionist Frances Power Cobbe, I will demonstrate how this theory worked within stereotypical Victorian conceptions of femininity and by doing so, remains problematic as well as contradictory (see also French, Elston, Richards). In contrast to women's apparent biological affinity towards animals, women

also may have identified with animals because they saw their own mistreatment and vulnerability reflected in the image of the animal on the cruel, hardened vivisector's table (see Lansbury). In illuminating these theories, I hope to establish the discourses surrounding the comparable positioning of women and animals that would have informed Collins' writing which will subsequently allow me to analyze in detail how his fiction joins this debate in both the second and third chapters of this thesis.

Modern and Victorian critics see the question of animal welfare as a reflection in the cultural unconscious of how civilized and progressive England was as a country. If animals were compared to the weaker members of society or subjugated foreigners, this equation meant that kindness to animals was also a reflection of how England treated those countries around them (Ritvo 131). Harriet Ritvo in *The Animal Estate* discusses the humane movement taking place in the early-to-mid-nineteenth century whose advocates argued that mistreating animals was a sign of moral degeneration rather than England's superior civilization (131). The antivivisection movement later on would be an extension of this humane movement but also more concerning to the established social order, as during the humane movements, cruelty towards animals was seen as a particularly lower class affliction, much like wife-beating (137); however, in the case of vivisection, doctors, scientists and educated men were the cruel ones when "cruelty to animals was supposed to characterize the most dangerous members of society, not those on whose responsible shoulders the social structure rested" (156). Vivisection thus disrupted class distinctions by showing upper-class men to be as depraved and cruel as their lower-class counterparts. Antivivisectionists believed men who engaged in vivisection showed themselves to be degraded and corrupted whereas those on the side of vivisection argued it was men's right to experiment on animals and resulted in important scientific discoveries for humanity (Carroll 343-

344). This aspect of the debate raised the question of how Victorian society defined progress and civilization. Frances Power Cobbe in “The Moral Aspects of Vivisection” defined civilization as measured by “the vindication of the rights of the weak” (18), meaning that every being must be treated with respect and kindness in order for a society to count as civilized. Antivivisectionists could thus argue that vivisection resulted in a barbarous country in which people, including its eminent men, better resembled wild predators than rational human beings. Lewis Carroll describes man’s deterioration into animal: “Man has something of the wild beast in him, that a thirst for blood can be aroused in him by witnessing a scene of carnage, and that the infliction of torture, when the first instincts of horror have been deadened by familiarity, maybe become, first, a matter of indifference...then a ghastly and ferocious delight” (346). As the vivisector continues his work, he becomes more and more animalistic and ferocious and thus less civilized or human. In this way, the vivisector’s own claims of superiority over animal beings could actually be used against them. In this view, antivivisection is not primarily a female concern; however, experimentation on animals is a problem with hierarchal thinking where certain beings consider others inferior objects to be manipulated for their own purposes which was more likely to be a concern of also vulnerable women rather than powerful men.

Vivisectionists treated animals as expendable when it came to advancing human knowledge; not surprisingly, antivivisectionists feared that scientific experimenters might morally degenerate to the point that they lost compassion for the vulnerable of their species, willingly sacrificing humans in the name of progress. Ritvo writes, “Antivivisectionists saw scientific experimentation on animals as a defilement of both nature and human nature, a symbol of what was wrong with a world in which people had assigned the highest priority to themselves, their reasoning power, and the gratification of their desires” (164). Men’s engagement with

rational, material science was beginning to take precedence over other methods of knowledge such as intuition or emotion in the new era of science and Turner describes how “a conflict between the head and the heart” (102) developed in society.<sup>10</sup> This conflict was due to science’s persistence on “coldly rational materialism” which “threatened to freeze human emotion and sensibility” (101). Science’s attempt to infiltrate medicine caused particular concern because the “cool, calculating, manipulative” scientist “clashed fundamentally with the traditional role of the family doctor” to soothe and comfort (97).<sup>11</sup> Cobbe, as a feminist writer, also voiced this concern that men, particularly doctors, were becoming hardened and degraded by not only scientific rationality but also more specifically by practicing vivisection. Vivisection “brutalized the men” (Cobbe “Rights of Man” 280) to such an extent that the cruelty of vivisectors could easily be transferred to women and other groups considered inferior: “If it be proper to torture a hundred affectionate dogs or intelligent chimpanzees to settle some curious problems about their brains, will they advocate doing the same to a score of Bosjesmen, to the idiots in our asylums, to criminals, to infants, to women?” (“Moral Aspects” 9). By grouping animals, “idiots,” infants, and women together, Cobbe suggests that these groups occupy comparably powerless positions in society and offers an explanation for women’s concern with the treatment of animals. She also links the question of civilization with scientific discovery by demonstrating how the vivisector’s method of scientific discovery jeopardized civilization by targeting weaker groups. The advancement of science was a concern for everyone but especially for women whose role it was to not only ensure morality is being upheld but whose stereotypically ascribed traits of greater emotion and sensitivity were being further devalued, meaning this could translate into even

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<sup>10</sup> Turner’s language here interestingly mimics that of Collins’ title *Heart and Science* which implies a strict binary relationship between reason and emotion.

<sup>11</sup> This clash will be exemplified in *Heart and Science*’s Dr. Benjulia whose dedication to vivisection prevents him from performing appropriate bedside practice. This issue will be explored in the second chapter of this thesis.

worse treatment for women and their becoming, like animals, subject to painful vivisection.

When women joined the antivivisectionist cause, they were thus not only resisting the increase of male-dominated scientific experiment but also their potential further subjugation.

For some theorists, vivisection was primarily a female concern not because the practice reinforced women's already subjugated position in society and perpetuated patriarchy but because women were inherently more connected to animals and the natural world. This belief, regardless of its validity, motivated women to join the antivivisectionist cause. This essentialist argument was bolstered by women's position as moral authorities in the home and Cobbe was one of its major proponents during the Victorian era. In her chapter devoted solely to Cobbe, Moira Ferguson outlines Cobbe's feminist and antivivisectionist beliefs that were rooted in the values of love, goodness, spirituality, and Englishness itself (118; 109). In "The Rights of Man and the Claims of Brutes," Cobbe suggests man is obligated by their common humanity not to harm but to care for animals or "brutes": "To kill or torture such animals is not only an offence against the laws of morality, but against the instincts of humanity and the feelings of the heart" (280). Mary Ann Elston analyzes Cobbe's arguments particularly through the influence of eco-feminism and "late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century thought" which held that women were more associated with the natural world and the feeling of sentiment than their male counterparts (260). Referencing Wollstonecraft's attack on "those who claimed that women were solely made for men's delight or that they were more governed by their passions than men, and therefore, closer to nature" (280),<sup>12</sup> Elston discusses how two bases for feminism came to "[co-exist] uneasily" with each other—the first being that women were equal to men and the second being that women had unique connections to the environment which patriarchs and scientists

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<sup>12</sup> 'Nature' here refers to the natural world—the environment and the living beings within it. When the term 'nature' is used in this thesis, this is the definition intended. Culture, in contrast, refers to the constructed structures and beliefs of society.

discounted and devalued. Science was purely masculine, “permeated with patriarchal assumptions, systematically denigrating and excluding women’s natural healing skills and knowledge, while controlling women’s lives” (262). Women, unlike scientists, were associated with “feelings not reason, and with nature not culture” (272).<sup>13</sup> While linking women with emotion is simplistic and perhaps even troublesome, the perception of women and men as exactly the same also holds the potential to be oppressive. If women *were* different than men, this fact did not and should not mean they were necessarily inferior. Indeed, Cobbe saw women’s role as upholders of morality as a powerful and important duty that sparked her own involvement in both feminism and animal welfare.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of whether women were truly more connected to the natural world, antivivisectionists who believed in this type of feminism saw their agitation as “part of moral reform, part of woman’s duty to help the helpless and purify the impure” (272).

In keeping with the idea of women’s inherent affinity with animals, modern critic Richard D. French suggests that women’s strong attachment to their pets was the reason for antivivisectionism which is an incomplete and problematic view of women in itself. Women contributed to forming the Victorian cult of pets and were more likely to experience “the psychological complications revolving around the relationship of human to animals, especially to pets” (389). Women’s attachment to animals could have come out of the “psychic consequences” of women viewing animals as increasingly human (389). In French’s view, women’s attachment

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<sup>13</sup> Since then much scholarship has been done to work through these problematic gendered binaries that structure Western thought. See *Material Feminisms* in which editors Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman acknowledge the concerns of seeing women as inherently aligned with nature but also argue that this dichotomy must be deconstructed in order “to move to an understanding that does not rest on oppositions” (2). In the introduction their volume, Alaimo and Hekman point to recent feminist work that has moved away from seeing women as tied to nature as problematic in itself: “The problem with this approach, however, is that the more feminist theories distance themselves from ‘nature,’ the more that very ‘nature’ is implicitly or explicitly reconfirmed as the treacherous quicksand of misogyny” (4). Through material feminism, they seek a “transvaluation” of nature (12).

<sup>14</sup> I would suggest as well that Collins’ work joins Cobbe in this argument. Through characters such as Zo Gallilee, Laura Fairlie, Anne Catherick, and even Marian Halcombe, he demonstrates women have power and abilities that, while different from men, were nevertheless strong and valuable.

might be ambivalent or problematic when they used animals to fulfill their emotional needs or to assert agency in their otherwise disempowered lives through their antivivisectionist resistance. Animal welfare allowed for women “to subvert female subservience with the conventional feminine tools of sentimentality and womanly concern for suffering” (Richards 131). If women were supposed to be tender and sensitive, antivivisection was an acceptable platform for them to voice their concerns and assert agency. With this theory in consideration, animals could be seen as objects for women too to manipulate for their own purposes, raising the question of whether women truly did care for animals more than men.<sup>15</sup> Like Richards, however, I do not believe this motive would have alone influenced so many women or have been the sole reason for them to agitate on behalf of animals. If some women did, in fact, desire power over other living beings, neither stereotype of the manipulative or the naturally sensitive woman accounts for their involvement in antivivisection campaigns. The desire for agency also does not explain why vivisection was chosen as a particular focus of the animal welfare campaign as women could just as easily have taken up issue with blood sports or meat-eating, activities which were practiced by everyone in society and not specifically men; rather, arguments surrounding women’s and animals’ joint victimization and devaluation at the hands of male scientists provide a more reasonable explanation for the antivivisection agitation.

For some female antivivisectionists, men’s cruelty in medicine, science and in wider society as a whole was epitomized in the practice of vivisection. The antivivisection movement

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<sup>15</sup> In *The Woman in White*, Marian Halcombe can be seen as contributing or perpetuating the infantilization of her sister Laura, treating her too like a lesser animal. These actions could be the result of Marian’s using Laura’s weakness to elevate herself or to show her to be the stronger, more equal woman of men just as female agitators for animal welfare might have used animals to voice their own concerns or show their strength. While this motivation might raise questions regarding the ethics of women’s involvement in animal welfare, I do not believe it lessens the truth of women’s and animals’ comparable positioning in Victorian society nor does it account for the resounding number of women who took up antivivisectionism or other animal welfare causes. In the case of Marian, an alternate reading of her perpetuating Laura’s oppression could suggest that women’s alignment with animals was so ingrained in Victorian culture that women themselves reinforced this connection in their relationship to those women who better conformed to the stereotypical vision of a proper Victorian women.



could thus be seen as inseparable from the discussion of women and their place in medical and social discourse. Coral Lansbury in *The Old Brown Dog* posits that when women witnessed and heard about animals being experimented on, they “saw their own condition hideously and accurately embodied in the figure of an animal bound to a table by straps with the vivisector’s knife at work on its flesh” (84). Women’s identification with these animals was labeled as “softheaded sentimentality” yet there was plenty of evidence that suggested women, especially lower-class women in charity wards, were subject to similar treatment (84). Lansbury draws on the writings of Anna Kingsford and Elizabeth Blackwell, both among the earliest women to become medical doctors, to argue that the gynaecological practices and exams of the time period were often as invasive as vivisection (84-88). Gynaecological operations such as the oophorectomy and clitoridectomy “epitomised” the “movement from animal to human vivisection” (Depledge 151). These procedures involved cutting into the female body to “unsex” her by removing the ovaries (151) or to excise the clitoris, the location of female sexual pleasure (Showalter 130). Lansbury also calls attention to the sexual violence against women in Victorian pornography which was rife with representations of the vivisector’s table and gynaecological exams. Antivivisectionist women perhaps did not make explicit connections between animals’ and their own plights with pornography; however, Lansbury points to the “uneasy similarity between the devices made to hold women for sexual pleasure and those tables and chairs, replete with stirrups and straps, which made women ready for the surgeon’s knife” (99). In Victorian pornography, “women are subdued and held by straps so they can be mounted and flogged more easily, and they always end as grateful victims, trained to enjoy the whip and the straps, proud to provide pleasure for their masters” (99). The male figure is typically a riding master, later even a doctor (122), and “the passion which drives him to frenzies of exertion is not sexual desire, but

the lust to dominate, to assert his authority, to control and subdue” (115). Men are thus violators, not driven by a desire to improve humanity through scientific discovery but rather by a perverse compulsion to dominate their victims.<sup>16</sup>

In pornography, women are not only aligned with animal victims, but represented as literally animalistic: “Throughout her flogging, the woman does not scream: she howls, mews, screeches, and yelps, for the pornographic novelist is careful to limit the amount of human feeling permitted his victim in her suffering, confining his animal subject in a net of language” (125). For Lansbury, vivisection is absolutely a female concern as the animals being tortured on the table were analogous to the pauper women being examined in hospitals and the young women being flogged in pornography. Cobbe too agreed that women were treated as animals, though she focussed on marriage rather than pornography. In “Wife-Torture in England”, Cobbe identifies wife abuse as “torture,” a word also used to describe vivisection, stating: “The notion that a man’s wife is his PROPERTY, in the sense in which a horse is his property...is the fatal root of incalculable evil and misery” (62). Here, she identifies that men’s knowledge of their ownership and power over groups like women and animals is what leads to cruelty and abuse. The ‘superior’ men know they can treat those who are inferior in virtually any manner without consequence.<sup>17</sup> The concern of these women, just as in the antivivisectionist campaign, was that men—husbands and doctors—were becoming corrupted by their dominance. In response to “smiling senators” who assert that men have only “the deepest and tenderest concern for women,” Cobbe says, “Shall we not point to these long-neglected wrongs of our trampled sisters

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<sup>16</sup> The use of animals in scientific experimentation still goes on today and is responsible for some advances made in human health yet, for many people then and now, the harm done to animals and the selfish motives of humans does not justify the suffering inflicted on animals.

<sup>17</sup> ‘Superior’ functions ironically here as men’s violence which proved their superior domination simultaneously exemplified their degradation. Deliberately inflicting cruelty as considered “among the worst moral evils” and showed an “unconcern for moral progress” which led to its association with degradation of the spirit (Turner 88).

and denounce the boast of the equal concern of men for women as—a falsehood?” (80). Men could no longer be trusted with the power and the “trampled sisters” (usually found in the lower classes) served as evidence of men’s cruelty in the same way tortured animals bore witness to the cruelty of scientists. The parallels between vivisection and wife-torture create an obvious connection between women and animals and thus, when Cobbe and women like Elizabeth Blackwell protested vivisection, they were not just concerned that women could become the vivisector’s next victims—rather, they recognized that *they already were* victims of medicine and patriarchy. Throughout this thesis, I will examine how Cobbe’s and Blackwell’s views come to be represented in Collins’ novels which most closely reflect this theory of women’s and animal’s joint victimization by men. Through Collins’ portrayal of women as occupying a comparable cultural position of inferiority to animals, he is able to expose the very cruelty of those who are superior which Cobbe, Blackwell and other women describe.

### The Influence of Darwin:

In terms of the discussion of the relationship between animals and humankind during the Victorian era, Charles Darwin’s works, *The Origin of Species* (1859), *The Descent of Man* (1871), and *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872), revolutionized the way humans understood themselves and the natural world and reflected the complex relationship between humans and animals. *The Origin of Species* outlines his theory of evolution—that animals and humans are descended from and have evolved from common ancestors that through time have become modified through a process called natural selection, more commonly known as ‘survival of the fittest.’ Darwin’s theory led to the greater recognition of the animal inside of

humanity and therefore, science itself “demonstrat[ed] the kinship of man and beast” and “paved the way for kindness to animals” (Turner 100). Turner argues that this new science had in fact “fathered antivivisection” as antivivisectionists need only “[cite] Darwin to shore up their claims for equal justice for animals” (100). Kinship with animals, however, thus introduced a paradox: kinship could at once suggest the possibility of empathy with non-human animals while simultaneously proving that vivisection and experimenting on the animal body could provide important medical discoveries for humans. As well, this kinship exacerbated the antivivisectionist fear that women’s bodies could become the next subject of experiment. Darwin himself supported and defended vivisection during the antivivisectionist controversy, claiming it was “a necessary tool of scientific research” (Turner 86). He did, however, feel distressed at the suffering of animals and agonized over the question of vivisection, ultimately deciding not to use the practice in his own work (86).<sup>18</sup> In this way, he embodied the change in the relationship of men to nature brought about by his own work. According to evolutionary theory, man was “*part of nature*” rather than occupying “*primacy over nature*” (Turner 127; original emphasis) yet Victorian science was continually proving men’s domination: “Clearly, if people were animals, they were the top animals” (Ritvo 40). The practice of vivisection and men’s wider treatment of non-human animals as objects of their control could thus be seen as a reassertion of man’s supremacy.

Darwin’s *Descent* adopts a more conventional stance than in his *Origin* and builds on evolutionary theory by discussing the idea of sexual selection, defined as a competition in which “males compet[ed] with each other for females” (Trivers 137). This competition leads to

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<sup>18</sup> Cobbe (who corresponded with Darwin over vivisection) saw Darwin’s defence of vivisection as further proof of the hardening and immorality of men of science, claiming “the contemptuous disregard of the claims of the brutes by those who have taught us that the brutes are only underdeveloped men, is one to fill us with sorrowful foreboding for that future of our race” (“Moral Aspects” 9).

stronger, superior men as Darwin argues that “men, as a general rule, have to work harder than the women for their joint subsistence, and thus their greater strength will have been kept up” (*Descent* 558). Looking at the difference between the two sexes, Darwin depicts women as less evolved than men and more closely linked to the lower orders. He assigns to women “the powers of intuition, of rapid perception, and perhaps of imitation” which are “characteristic of the lower races and therefore of a past and lower state of civilization” (558) while crediting men with “the higher mental faculties, namely, observation, reason, invention, or imagination” (559). Men’s “higher mental qualities” are a natural result of natural selection—“the general struggle for life”—and sexual selection—“the contest of rival males”—which is then transmitted to a greater extent to their male offspring (559). Darwin’s theories thus enabled Victorian patriarchal society to legitimize their sexist beliefs through a scientific and biological discourse: men should dominate women because they were more evolved and women were like animals because they shared the characteristics with the lower orders. This theory seemed to prove Cobbe’s and later Elston’s argument that women’s interest in the antivivisection campaign could be explained by the natural, biological affinity that existed between the two groups. Other scientists like Thomas Henry Huxley and Herbert Spencer used Darwin’s theories to reinforce hierarchal structures between the sexes as well as other races. In an essay titled “Emancipation—Black and White” (1865), Huxley claims that not even education would make women the equal of men but rather “the big chests, the massive brains, the vigorous muscles and stout frames of the best men will carry the day” (para.12) and better educated women will only “bring forth better sons” (para.12). Spencer coined the term “survival of the fittest” in his work *Principles of Biology* (1864) which emphasized that the strong survive while the weak will eventually die out in society. He also forwarded the movement called Social Darwinism which “used the idea of evolution to place

humans at the pinnacle of creation...humans, especially white, Anglo-Saxon, male humans were the ‘fittest’ and hence the most deserving” (Preece 403).<sup>19</sup> Similar to Spencer’s writings, eugenics would also ultimately come out of the theory of evolution, introduced by Darwin’s cousin Francis Galton (Levine *Darwin the Writer* vi). Richards examines how men like Huxley were able to capitalize on this historical and social context of Darwin’s writing to “preserve the status quo” and promote the idea of “social progress through scientific advance” amongst female attempts to break out of conventional domestic roles (120). These men used Darwin to authoritatively voice conventional opinions on women’s status in society: “Women were inherently different from men in their anatomy, physiology, temperament, and intellect...Women, like the ‘lower’ races, could never expect to match the intellectual or cultural achievements of men or obtain an equal share of power and authority” (121). Therefore, Darwin’s theories were viewed by some Victorians interested in retaining patriarchal power as a way of scientifically proving, naturalizing, and asserting men’s dominance.

More recent criticism, however, has done much to recuperate Darwin from being read as a mere promoter of socially dominant attitudes of a gendered hierarchy. While work like Elizabeth A. Wilson’s *Psychosomatic* has attempted to reconcile feminism with biology more generally, other critics such as Gillian Beer and Elizabeth Grosz have looked particularly at Darwin and emphasized how his position that fittingness (or ‘fitness’) was relative to one’s ability to survive in any environment could actually function to destabilize rather than affirm men’s prominence over women. The Darwinian concept of fitness means “well adapted” and “anything that improved the chance for survival in the struggle for existence increased fitness” (Mayr 88). If women’s apparently inherent qualities of intuition and perception were therefore

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<sup>19</sup> While I do not intend to discuss the Social Darwinist movement or others like it such as eugenics in detail in this thesis, they are noteworthy because they exemplify how Darwin’s theories were manipulated to reinforce the established hierarchal social order.

better adapted and well ‘fitted’ to their environment, they could potentially succeed to a greater extent than their logical male counterparts. While *Descent* may be more conservative, *Origin* and *Expression* correspond with this reading by revealing a side of Darwin that is unifying and inclusive. Beer’s *Darwin’s Plots* discusses how his ideas (particularly in *Origin*) have been “appropriated to serve as confirming metaphors for beliefs politically at odds with those of Darwin himself, such as Social Darwinism” (13). Beer recuperates Darwin by pointing out his “considerable pains...to avoid legitimating the current social order by naturalising it” (53). Darwin refused to reference man as the “crowning achievement of the natural and supernatural order” (54) and instead “sought to restore man to his kinship with all other forms of life” (57). Referring to his early notebooks, Beer argues they reveal an “exultant pleasure” in the equality between life forms and he took care not to qualify them hierarchically (55). George Levine in *Darwin and the Novelists*, picking up on Beer’s work, differentiates between *Origin* and *Descent* as he claims that the former “does not directly sanction ‘Social Darwinism’ (whereas *The Descent of Man* does)” (10). Levine examines how Darwin’s writing influenced literature and to do so, he distinguishes the ‘real’ Darwin from misconceptions: “[Darwin’s theory] was part of the movement of liberal democratic culture...that rejects traditional hierarchy for the natural man, assuming that all humans are potentially equal—anyone can achieve what the great figures of history have achieved given the right conditions” (87). This view is one which denies perfect classification and instead, reveals “there is no closure in the system of nature, for the world is in constant process” (85). Thus, *Origin*, rather than affirming distinctions, displays their impermanence and ever-adapting nature.

*Expression*, one of Darwin’s less analyzed works, also portrays life forms’ relations as interconnected rather than hierarchical. *Expression* demonstrates that “all those aspects of human

identity and experience that are traditionally regarded as uniquely human, connected with spiritual states unavailable to lower organisms, are in fact physical conditions shaped by other organisms” (Levine *DATN* 146). To show that humanity’s expressions and emotions are universal and shared with animals, Darwin formulated three principles that exemplified why expressions bore certain forms (Ekman xxii, xxiv).<sup>20</sup> This overall study hoped to show “humans are not a separately divinely created species” (xxv). He also suggested that humankind descended from a common, single ancestor and therefore, was ultimately one, unified species, a claim that combatted racist beliefs of the time (xxvii). Paul Ekman, in his introduction to Darwin’s work, says of the consequences of *Expression*’s argument: “If we grant that animals feel terror about impending pain, and distress and sadness...if they not only feel these emotions but are aware of these feelings, it may become difficult to justify experiments on animals” (xxxix). Thus, Darwin’s theories might actually function as proof against vivisection and other cruelty rather than ratifying these practices. According to Ekman, this deviation from “reigning dogmas” may even have contributed to *Expression*’s unpopularity (xxxiv). Elizabeth Grosz relates this more liberal view of Darwin directly to feminism, stating the ““winners’ of evolutionary struggle” are “those most open and amenable to change” which is important for the feminist movement gaining momentum around this time (21). She says, “In Darwin’s work too there is a sense in which the domination of individuals of species is precarious and necessarily historically limited, that the very successes of dominant groups produce the conditions for the domination of other groups that differ from them and serve to transform them” (29). Without claiming Darwin as feminist, Grosz convincingly demonstrates how his work can be valuable for feminists and thus, actually subvert the cultural norms evolutionary theory apparently affirmed.

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<sup>20</sup> These three principles are the principle of serviceable associated habits, the principle of antithesis, and the principle of actions due to the constitution of the nervous system (*Expression* 34). While I will not be explaining these principles at length, the fact Darwin formulated them at all is what is primarily important for my purposes.



The dual interpretations of Darwin's theories encapsulates much of the contradictory and fraught relations between humans and animals during the antivivisection controversy. Darwin's destabilizing nature is important to interpretations of Collins' fiction as Collins was writing at the same time and addressed similar issues of gendered hierarchy and gendered characteristics which he too destabilizes. As will be illustrated in the following chapters, Collins in both *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White* deviates from stereotypical and hierarchal understandings of gendered knowledge, showing men as gaining real insight through intuition while women are capable of logic and reason. In the second chapter's analysis of *Heart and Science* and its antivivisectionist polemic, I will demonstrate how Zo with her animalistic instincts, and her brother, Ovid, with his ability to combine both emotion and intellect, ultimately defeat Benjulia, the hardened and cruel vivisector. In doing so, Collins redeems the power of these methods of knowledge and recommends a proper type of medical care and masculinity which includes rather than excludes emotion, affect and embodied care. *The Woman in White*, the focus of the third chapter, endorses a similar project in complex ways. Count Fosco proves himself to be a more effective villain through his ability to perform sensitivity and appeal to emotions while the brutish, unfeeling Sir Percival is unsuccessful. Through the detective skills of Marian Halcombe, readers learn the combination of logic and instinct is the most effective method of detection and that stereotypical feminine insight through intuition or instinct can yield valuable results. Many of Collins' characters thus challenge and resist simplistic stereotyping in order to force readers to re-evaluate not only gendered divisions but constructions of superiority and inferiority.

Conclusion:

Looking back to the antivivisection movement as well as the various theories around the movement, one can see how the comparable position of women and non-human animals was both implicit and explicit in Victorian society. In the next two chapters, I will offer an extensive analysis of *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White*, delving deeper into how Collins presents women's and animals' comparable positioning. The theories presented above merit attention not only to lend context to Collins' writing but to demonstrate how his cultural moment was one in which these issues were being debated, discussed, and potentially transformed. As the turn of the century came closer, change for women was slowly making strides. The Married Women's Property Bill in 1882 substantively disrupted the existing law that perpetuated the sexual double standard (Poovey 85). This new bill was thus a considerable victory for feminists such as Caroline Norton (85). The figure of the New Woman emerged, marking women's growing subversion of typical gender roles. The New Woman was progressive in that she endorsed new experiences, new fashions, and new roles for women other than just those of wife and mother (Pykett *The Improper Feminine* 138-139). As well, another victory for women, especially for the lower-class, occurred when the Contagious Diseases Act—an Act which targeted women of the streets by allowing officers to medically inspect them for venereal diseases against their will—was struck down in 1886 (Hamilton 27). Collins' novels both reflect and predict these changes, joining the debates of animal welfare and the woman question as well as how these two issues are connected. Through his ability to provoke sensation, Collins asks readers to engage their emotions, their bodies, and their nerves not only to render them as stereotypically 'feminine' but to exemplify the close link between the human and animal or corporal being. By doing so, Collins continues the destabilizing and disruptive work of feminists, antivivisectionists and even Darwin.

## Chapter 2: Of Dogs and Doctors: Collins' Antivivisectionist Polemic in *Heart and Science*

In the 1889 *Fortnightly Review*, A.C. Swinburne adapts a well-known couplet of the time to give his opinion on Collins' novel *Heart and Science*: "What brought good Wilkie's genius nigh perdition?/ Some demon whispered—'Wilkie! Have a mission'" (*HS* 375). Collins' "mission" in *Heart and Science* is to write a polemic against vivisection and to make his voice heard on the side of antivivisectionists such as Frances Power Cobbe. While not affiliated with the antivivisectionist societies of the time, he was sympathetic to their cause and carried on friendly relationships with some of the activists (Farmer 17). Finding a correspondent in Cobbe, he incorporated her details seamlessly into his novels with "an evident understanding of the underlying feminist polemics" (Lycett 177). Collins was also an animal lover in his own life (he owned a Scottish terrier) and they tended to gravitate towards him as well (282). Despite minimal critical attention (Farmer 20), *Heart and Science* is much more than merely a warning against the dangers of vivisection; rather, Collins uses the novel to take on other complex issues bound up in the question of whether vivisection was an acceptable practice, such as the devaluation of emotion, the privileging of logic, and the definition of proper medical care.<sup>21</sup>

In this chapter, I will begin by briefly examining how Collins forwards his antivivisectionist polemic through his engagement of readers' sensations to appeal to both their mind and body (see Straley). I will then turn to Dr. Benjulia, Collins' vivisecting villain, who presents the menaces of vivisection in the way he experiments on female bodies in his domestic life and in his medical practice. His treatment of his cook and later, his neglect of the deathly ill Carmina demonstrates how the vivisector comes to see the animal and female body as

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<sup>21</sup> 'Emotion' in this thesis will be defined as feeling or the sensations from one's body that connects them to other human beings. 'Instinct' refers to the impulses one receives without thinking about them that prompts one to act.

interchangeable as well as equally suitable for experimentation and manipulation. Collins is clear that Benjulia's integrity as a man and doctor is compromised by the practice of vivisection;<sup>22</sup> however, he also exemplifies the limits to Benjulia's authority as a rational scientist—he cannot prevent himself from feeling emotion despite his hardening. Benjulia's capacity for emotion is particularly brought out in his relationship with young Zoe Gallilee, more affectionately known as 'Zo.' Zo's character shows how the body and the instincts can provide valuable insights as her actions, performed on impulse, ultimately save the day by calling home her brother Ovid to heal Carmina. Finally, I will discuss Ovid's ability to combine "heart" and "science" in conjunction with his medical practices of embodied and intersubjective care as Collins' prescription for what a good doctor and proper masculine figure should be. Ovid is thus rewarded with a happy ending because he models the proper man who treats those whom society labels inferior such as women and animals as fellow beings who deserve love, care and respect. Through these characters, Collins offers a story that goes beyond the antivivisection debate to the most troubling aspects of the alignment between women and animals and how these 'lesser' groups can not only be revalued, but also, how those in superior positions can adopt practices of genuine, embodied and interrelated care towards other beings of the natural world.

Collins clearly draws on the work and tenets of antivivisectionists such as Cobbe to first establish *Heart and Science* as an antivivisection polemic. Steve Farmer's introduction to the Broadview edition of *Heart and Science* outlines three basic themes Collins specifically takes on:

- 1) that vivisection had a hardening effect on the moral character of the practitioner, 2) that the motives behind the practice of vivisection were morally questionable, at best, and 3) that Man had neither a moral nor a

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<sup>22</sup> Benjulia's unsuitability as a man and doctor due to vivisection is the most common argument made about his character. See Straley, Farmer and briefly Sparks for such arguments.

medical right to assume a superiority over the ‘lower animals’ that might fall prey to vivisection. (18)

These tenets do not focus on the actual practices or procedures of vivisection but on the motivation and psychology behind it as well as the effects. At stake in the question of vivisection for Collins was Victorian society’s evaluation of which lives were valuable and which were disposable and who had the “right” to decide on this categorization. In order to reconnect his readers to the idea of a common humanity, Collins draws on sensational style in *Heart and Science* to engage their emotions and bodies. Jessica Straley addresses the argument that vivisection was the “aesthetic counterpart” of the sensation genre, making it an appropriate choice for Collins’ subject material (350). She describes how “Sensation fiction was drawn from the exposed bowels of an eviscerated social body, and, like vivisection, it morbidly excited its readers’ nervous systems. If to write Sensation fiction is to dissect and vivisect, then an antivivisection Sensation novel is a [seemingly] contradictory enterprise” (351). She goes on to discuss the way readers of sensation could be transformed from “laboratory animal” to “heartless medical student” (356) throughout the course of the novel by first having their feelings or nerves constantly manipulated and then gradually becoming accustomed or hardened to the exhilaration of the novel’s “sadistically dispensed shocks” (356). Ultimately, Straley reverses this position, arguing that Collins’ use of sensation in the novel is not to dissect or vivisect but rather to reconnect readers to their bodies and emotive responses (352). What Collins does by stimulating readers is “produce that strange mingling of pain and pleasure that is the unique province of tickling, while avoiding mutilation” (372). “Tickling” and “mutilation” refer directly to two of Benjulia’s practices in the novel—one which is a comparatively harmless form of stimulation while the other is invasive and destructive. Collins therefore produces sensation in his readers just enough to rid his late nineteenth century readers of the notion that the powers of the mind

such as objectivity and logic were superior and disconnected from those powers typically associated with the body like instinct and feeling. In order to make the strongest protest against vivisection, the novel thus appeals to both methods of understanding—the mind and the body. To do this, Collins employs his three central characters, Benjulia, Zo and Ovid to demonstrate the improper and proper balances between logic and emotion as well as the consequences of denying the power of the body.

Dr. Benjulia: The Vivisecting Villain and His Limited Authority:

Dr. Benjulia with his walking-stick, bloody hands, and secret laboratory presents a menacing character who epitomizes the problems of vivisection through his hardened indifference, his pleasure in seeing others in pain, and his privileging of knowledge over humanity. Benjulia's cruelty also demonstrates the connection between women and animals as he views the female body as interchangeable with the animal subjects on his table. Collins establishes Benjulia as a cruel, hard man who takes pleasure in torturing others even outside of his scientific practice. In a domestic scene with his cook, he summons her in order to dismiss her from his service, but she believes he intends to profess his love and propose marriage to her (she has just been reading Samuel Richardson's *Clarissa*). During their interaction, the cook is continually described in terms of the stereotypical female who is governed solely by her emotions and affective responses—she is “excitable,” comes to him crying “with one hand on her palpitating heart” (213), and “show[s] signs of tender agitation” (214). The cook is rendered vulnerable to experiment by her emotion which Benjulia manipulates, delaying the news of her dismissal and prodding her with questions about *Clarissa* to observe her agitation. Collins makes

the parallel to vivisection explicit: “[Benjulia] pursued his own ends with a penitent cook, just as he pursued his own ends with a vivisected animal” (214). The cook and the animal are in comparable positions, both subject to the “ends” and methods of the male vivisector. With the cook, Benjulia does not just vivisect, he takes pleasure in his experiment: “Always a physiologist, even in those moments when he was amusing himself, it had just struck Benjulia that the cook—after her outbreak of fury—might be a case worth studying. But she had got relief in crying; her brain was safe; she had ceased to interest him” (217). He is always proceeding scientifically even when he is “amusing himself,” showing his inability to separate his scientific work from his daily life. Lansbury argues this amusement is sexual in nature; she reads the scene with the cook as revealing Benjulia’s “sexual drive” which “manifests itself in the calculated ferocities of torture” (*The Old Brown Dog* 139). He is excited by a desire to inflict and observe the pain of those ‘inferior’ to him like the cook. Through his conflation of pain with pleasure, Lansbury illuminates Benjulia’s perverseness, demonstrating how vivisection has warped the sensations of the scientist who can now only feel stimulated by the sight of pain while being simultaneously deadened to the infliction of it. Benjulia’s loss of “interest” in the cook once she is no longer worth studying also suggests that men may only hold interest in women as long as they are subjects of experiment and not fellow human beings. “Interest” or sexual pleasure thus becomes about the desire for power, manipulation and superiority which links back to Lansbury’s earlier parallels between Victorian pornography and vivisection. Collins uses this scene with the cook to foreshadow Benjulia’s treatment of women as experimental subjects rather than human beings to be treated with love.

Benjulia continues his cruel experimentation on women in his professional capacity when he is called to attend on the deathly ill Carmina. His medical attendance is not one of embodied care or sympathy; rather, he views her body as merely another vehicle for experimentation:

Here was no common affection of the brain, which even Mr. Null could understand! Here, at last, was Benjulia's reward for sacrificing the precious hours which might otherwise have been employed in the laboratory! From that day, Carmina was destined to receive unknown honour: she was to take her place, along with the other animals, in his note-book of experiments. (*HS* 280)

By seeing Carmina as a “reward” for his “sacrifice” of time he could be spending vivisecting animals, Benjulia reveals his misconceptions about what medical and scientific practice actually entail. As well, the alignment between women and animals is explicit—Carmina is valued no higher than a non-human animal as both are merely means to the scientist's end. Benjulia transfers his work in his laboratory to his bedside patients, demonstrating how vivisection does not lead to scientific progress but rather brutalized, indifferent doctors who are detached from humanity. Despite Mr. Null's assertion that Benjulia is “the greatest [doctor] we have,” Benjulia does not exercise any of his knowledge to save his patient, showing the gap between the “great” doctor and the good man which Teresa points out (281). Lansbury makes this argument, stating Collins “deflect[s] the existing emotional response from the subject to the figure of the vivisector—and it is not what the vivisector does that is so appalling, but what he is as a man” (*Old Brown Dog* 140). Lansbury posits that Benjulia's medical treatment of Carmina (or lack thereof) is not what most provokes readers' disapproval but instead that Benjulia has degenerated into a man who would treat a being under his care in such a manner. The good man and the good doctor are thus inseparable. Benjulia's torture of domestic figures, such as the cook and then Carmina, the young heroine who is integral to the marriage plot, shows his potential cruelty as a husband. Married women, as discussed in the first chapter, enjoyed few rights or even claims to



personhood as their existence was absorbed into that of their husband. They moved from their father's protection to a husband's "cover," as Blackstone explains, and therefore had almost no economic or personal freedom. A wife, more so than the cook or Carmina, would be completely under the authority and control of Benjulia, making her extremely vulnerable to his indifference and outright cruelty.<sup>23</sup> Where the cook could seek employment elsewhere and support herself economically, Benjulia's potential wife would not have this option available. As an orphan, Carmina too shares vulnerabilities with the lower-class cook as she is dependent on a guardian for economic support; however, what truly separates these two women from the wife is that they retain personhood—albeit one that is marginal—whereas the wife does not. Benjulia's wife would effectively be similar in status to the animal subject in his laboratory, hidden away in the home and abused by the vivisector. Female antivivisectionists thus had reason for concern as they saw their fellow beings and themselves being devalued to the extent of becoming a necessary sacrifice for scientific discovery.

While Collins instrumentalizes Benjulia to expose the villainies and menace of vivisection, he also makes readers connect with and even sympathize with the villain, demonstrating the limits of his authority and the power of his own humanity which does not allow him to completely exclude emotion. Victorian critics, such as the anonymous writer in the *Spectator* of May 1883, noted the complexity of Benjulia as a character who "irresistibly compels pity, even for a man who is himself pitiless" (335). The same critic claimed that "we know him and understand him" and that "he is himself alive" due to the consistency of his character with human nature (337). Collins fosters a connection between readers and his villain, revealing the humanity that has been ignored in the vivisector but also the potential cruelty that

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<sup>23</sup> Straley comments on how taking into account Collins' body of work "easily forecasts a plot hinging on Benjulia's dreadful power as a husband and Carmina's pathetic debility as a wife" (361).

may lie within readers themselves as when readers connect with Benjulia emotionally, they are tempted to examine their own actions and question whether they too are culpable of mistreating their fellow beings. Benjulia's humanity and emotion is revealed when he describes one of his experiments:

My last experiments on a monkey horrified me. His cries of suffering, his gestures of entreaty, were like the cries and gestures of a child. I would have given the world to put him out of his misery. But I went on. In the glorious cause I went on. My hands turned cold—my heart ached—I thought of a child I sometimes play with—I suffered. (191)

First, Collins garners sympathy for the vivisected animal that suffers and entreats with no hope of reprieve. In this image of suffering, Depledge argues he also “uses a topical allusion to theories of evolution, closely connecting the monkey with the child. Clearly, this direct reference to man's simian ancestry conveys the vulnerability of the human to experimental vivisection” (155). By connecting Collins to Darwin, Depledge shows how his work tunes into the conversations of the day and responds not just to vivisection but to the emerging scientific theories and discourses of evolution. Human experimental vivisection is clearly the connection Collins conjures in this quotation; however, while the animal's suffering and movements are like that of the child, they are also like the suffering of Benjulia himself. In order to show the interconnectedness of all beings, Collins is sure to present Benjulia as not completely unaffected as he must bear the emotional consequences of his cruelty. The vivisector “ache[s],” “turn[s] cold,” and feels “horrified” at his own actions which he sees as being enacted on both the monkey and his child friend Zo. These feelings are similar to the pain and fear his own victim would experience. Babette Babich, in her discussion of the role of pain, states that sympathy exists “across the species barrier” (141) and when the vivisector ignores the sounds of pain he effectually denies the existence of the animal's pain as well as his own. This moment is one in

which Benjulia becomes connected not only to his humanity but he comes to understand his subjectivity as relational and is affected by the pain of the monkey.<sup>24</sup> He potentially achieves sympathy with his subjects; however, in this scene, he ultimately rejects his emotions in favour of the “glorious cause” of knowledge.

Benjulia’s humanity and capacity for emotion are further illuminated in his special relationship with Zo, the youngest Gallilee, which centers on her and his favourite amusement—tickling. Benjulia’s method of tickling is scientific in nature, like an experiment, while Zo is stimulated in body and emotion (96).<sup>25</sup> Conversely, Zo’s touch evokes in Benjulia “the one tender place in his nature, unprofaned by the infernal cruelties which made his life acceptable to him; the one tender place, hidden so deep from the man himself, that even his far-reaching intellect groped in vain to find it out” (246). Here, Benjulia feels a connection with a fellow human being and Zo’s gentle and unassuming touch is the powerful tool that summons it as Straley says: “In the moment when Zo lays her hand on Benjulia’s knee, *Heart and Science* makes love and sympathy, emotion and ethics, the result of physical sensation” (370). Collins shows the power of intersubjective exchange—even the cold, hardened Benjulia is capable of feeling. The message is once again that vivisection or the deliberate torture of inferior beings goes against human nature, corrupting a person’s morality and making cruelty an easier or even more accepted act to perform. In this scene, Collin exposes the danger of too much “science” at the expense of “heart” as resulting in men who ultimately live lives of regret and end in destruction such as Benjulia’s own suicide (*HS* 324). Benjulia decides to take his life because he

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<sup>24</sup> Here, affect is understood as “something relational and transformative” (Flatley 6) and occurs when one attaches to oneself to an object, thus moving “outside of one’s subjectivity” (19).

<sup>25</sup> Lansbury argues that Benjulia derives sexual pleasure from this exercise and he “tickles little girls for the same perverse reason that he tortures animals” (“Gynaecology” 431). Depledge disagrees, however, claiming that “thinly veiled sexual interplay between a middle-aged man and a small child” would not be likely in a novel designated for “general readership” (156). Straley sees tickling as affirming Zo’s need for touch (368). Alternatively, I will discuss the relationship between Benjulia and Zo as one which demonstrates Benjulia to be capable of emotion.

has nothing to live for without the chance of scientific discovery but also as a way of making amends for the pain he inflicted on his animal victims. In fact, before he dies, he treats his servants fairly, leaving them a month's wages and a letter of reference (322). He also leaves all of his possessions to Zoe as an apology and recompense to his victims (322). Thus, emotion is ultimately more powerful than science or logic as his "far-reaching intellect" is unable to access the place of humanity within him—only his connection to another being. By offering a glimpse into Benjulia's potential humanity, Collins allows readers to connect and even sympathize with him, further exemplifying the ties that bind people to each other as not even the story's villain is completely cut off from human connection. In her discussion of sympathy in relation to *The Woman in White*, Suzanne Rintoul identifies in Collins' work a particular brand of "sensational sympathy" in which a "psychic exchange" takes place, "undermin[ing] male privilege" (96) and compelling men to feel "for and like the victims of abuse" (95). In his experiments on the monkey and his relationship with Zo, signified by her touch, Benjulia has an experience similar to "sensational sympathy" in which he too realizes his common humanity and therefore his own vulnerability to the very acts of torture he inflicts on others. Collins thus opens up his polemic as pertaining to more than just vivisection but also the interconnectedness or inter-relatedness of all beings from the monkey to the child Zo to the rational scientist Benjulia. Cruelty is thus not just an act inflicted on others but also against oneself. He also presents Benjulia's potential to be the good man and good doctor which persists despite his consistent cruelty to demonstrate how the power of emotion cannot be completely excluded by logic—a lesson epitomized by his friend, Zo.

Zo: The Triumph of Emotion:

Zo, as a female child, could be viewed as comparable to animal or female victims of vivisection; however, she defies this victimization through her instinctive methods of knowledge and impulsive actions. Collins clearly depicts her as aligned with animals: she is often sitting with the family dog on her lap (229-230) and her mannerisms mimic those of the terrier when seeking her brother's attention (78, 92). For Depledge, Zo "personifies the categories that were seen to justify experimentation on humans—female, child, and idiot" (151). Importantly, however, she does not become a victim of vivisection as she uses characteristics stereotypically attributed to the 'lower orders' of being and against cultural norms to triumph. Collins' first description of Zo labels her "one of the unsuccessful products of the age we live in," as "a curiously slow, quaint, self-contained child...incurably stupid, or incurably perverse—the friends of the family were not quite sure which" (*HS* 64). First, Collins suggests that Zo does not adhere to typical, expected standards of knowledge, intelligence, and manners. The "age we live in" is an increasingly scientific one, one that values logic, reason, and intellect, making Zo seem "unsuccessful." Her description is filtered for readers through the impressions of "friends of the family" or an outsider while Collins rejects such valuations and clearly represents her as capable of insights. Zo, however, actually rejects or struggles against normative understandings of knowledge. Unlike her sister Maria who is an attentive pupil for governess Miss Minerva, Zo struggles to pay attention to her school books—they are "crumpled by weary fingers, and stained by frequent tears. Oh, fatal knowledge! mercifully forbidden to the first two of our race, who shall count the crimes and stupidities committed in your name" (66). Here, Zo's school work is literally marked with the signs of suffering, frustration and perplexity. Collins waxes poetic on the subject, foreshadowing the "crimes and stupidities" committed by Benjulia in his pursuit of knowledge. Knowledge is "fatal" and not necessarily an object to be prized and valued over

other qualities. This view of knowledge also directly goes against those of Zo's mother, Mrs. Gallilee who embraces science and academic knowledge to such an extent she does not value emotion. Mrs. Gallilee becomes "At Home to Science" at the end of the novel when she is cut off from her family and surrounded by learned friends—only then does she declare herself "at last" a "happy woman" (327).<sup>26</sup> Her character thus contrasts with Zo as too invested in "science" rather than emotion or interrelatedness while Zo's rejection of her schoolbooks in this scene prepares readers for her reliance on intuition and instinct instead of logic.

Despite being labelled "female, child, and idiot" (Depledge 151), Zo's ability to relate emotionally and trust her own instincts allows her to act with a perception that evades the logical, reasoning adults. Notably when Carmina falls ill, Zo functions as the unexpected and inadvertent hero. Collins explains,

Possessed of that wonderful capacity for minute observation of the elder persons about them, which is one among the many baffling mysteries presented by the minds of children, Zo had long since discovered that the member of the household preferred to all others by Carmina was the good brother who had gone away and left them... The child's slow-working mental process arrived more easily than usual at the right conclusion. The way to make Carmina well and happy again, was to bring Ovid back. (256)

Collins privileges the mind of the child, which would also be associated with femininity and animalization, and shows how her "slow-working mental process" are able to arrive at truth—a truth that no one else seems to realize. Zo's letter to Ovid is almost illiterate, written in a way that displays her total lack of knowledge by its lack of punctuation or proper grammar and she "reduce[s] all the words in the English language, by a simple process of abridgement, to words of

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<sup>26</sup> Mrs. Gallilee's character troubles the alignment between women and animals because of her extreme commitment to rational science and rejection of emotion and logic. In one scene, Mrs. Gallilee's practicality is displayed when she suggests poisoning Ovid's cat instead of caring for it while he is away (127). I would suggest Collins uses her character to deconstruct the binary between male logic and female emotion in that Mrs. Gallilee demonstrates that women are just as capable as men of becoming indifferent by the influence of science while also dismissing the stereotype of the emotional woman. She could also be an example of Collins' ability to create real and complex characters rather than merely allegories of positions or ideas.

one syllable” (256). Her letter thus simultaneously exposes her ignorance and her perceptiveness, her lack of practical knowledge and her strong instincts. In this scene, emotion and instinct are the solution to helping Carmina but also, as Zo intuit, they will be the means of actually curing her. Zo thus calls on Ovid the lover, not Ovid the doctor, to work this transformation. Her ability to sympathize and truly understand the emotions Carmina has towards Ovid enables her to act when no one else does. With Zo’s actions here, Straley points out, “Collins enacts a perfect irony: the animal trumps the vivisector” (364). The “animal” Zo outsmarts Benjulia, interrupting his experiment and summoning back to town the means of ruining of his grand scientific discovery. In this way, Zo is like her elder brother Ovid who heals Carmina not strictly through medical means but through his own love and caring attention. Sympathy thus can and does yield inter-relational benefits as the instinct and feelings of Zo have “trumped” Benjulia’s vivisectioning experimentation which suggests these methods of knowledge should be privileged and valued.

#### Ovid Vere: Modeling Good Doctors and Good Men:

Ovid Vere as a doctor and male hero foils Benjulia by demonstrating how to be a good doctor and a good man. In Tabitha Sparks’ article, Ovid signifies “heart” as he “empathizes so powerfully with others’ pain that in the early part of the novel he has been sickened by ‘overwork,’ which also symbolizes a mode of sympathetic illness” (22). For Sparks, the “heart” in Collins’ title refers to a “type of medicine that embraces domesticity and morality” while “science” refers to the material science Benjulia practices (14). While Zo is almost entirely emotional, instinctual, and intuitive, Ovid’s ability to view his domestic life and his work as “interrelated” deconstructs the heart-science binary and models what Collins would prescribe as

proper masculinity.<sup>27</sup> Ovid, like Zo, presents sympathy as yielding inter-relational benefits in his earlier care for the dying man in Montreal through whom he obtains the manuscript that provides the cure for Carmina's brain disease as well as his embodied care for Carmina. In a letter to Carmina, Ovid describes how, despite being expressly forbidden from practicing his profession due to his failing health, he becomes intrigued by a case of a dying and desolate man who is one of his friend Mr. Morphew's patients. Hearing that this man is dying with no one to comfort him, Ovid says, "I ventured to make some inquiries. The answers painted such a melancholy picture of poverty and suffering, and so vividly reminded me of a similar case in my own experience, that I forgot I was an invalid myself, and volunteered to visit the dying man in Mr. Morphew's place" (159). Ovid shows his own capacity to sympathize with his fellow human beings. The "melancholy picture of poverty and suffering" appears to him "vividly," suggesting it appeals to his senses and emotions. He connects and empathizes with this man's plight, forgetting his own self and thinking only of the man. Ovid then goes on to describe his encounter with this man:

The messenger led me to the poorest quarter of the city, and to a garret in one of the wretchedest houses in the street. There he lay, without anyone to nurse him, on a mattress on the floor. What his malady was, you will not ask to know, I will only say that any man but a doctor would have run out of the room, the moment he entered it. To save the poor creature was impossible. For a few days longer, I could keep the pain in subjection, and could make death easy when it came. (159)

The description of the squalid condition of this man's house and street emphasizes his miserable circumstances and vulnerability. The squalor also raises the question of civilization discussed earlier as a truly civilized society means better living conditions for everyone. The only person who would remain to nurse this dying man is a doctor and Collins, through this statement of

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<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, *Heart and Science* still reveals some gender biases as it is only a man who is able to model the combination of "heart" and "science." The female character who comes closest to this combination is Miss Minerva, the intelligent governess with intense feelings of love for Ovid. Her love, however, is so strong that she must continually repress her feelings in order to not harm Carmina, Ovid's beloved. In her case, her emotions are at some points too strong and too intense rather than perfectly balanced.



Ovid's, depicts what he believes an ideal doctor should be. A proper doctor tends to the sick, regardless of the circumstances, and shows compassion. Ovid stays, despite the fact he cannot save the man and thereby demonstrate his medical prowess, and makes sure to prevent the man from experiencing any pain. The pain, torture, and experimentation of vivisection is replaced with tenderness, mercy, and genuine care. Sparks states that through his presentation of Ovid's medical care, Collins' "message is clear: the humanitarian practice of medicine leads to a great reward" (23). The reward for Ovid is a manuscript that reveals the cure for the exact type of brain disease Carmina later contracts. The aid Ovid provides the dying man in Montreal demonstrates how people who help other people are not only helped themselves but their actions continue to have positive repercussions for others like Carmina.

In gratitude for his service, the dying man leaves Ovid the cure to brain disease, effectively giving him the power to heal Carmina's mind in addition to healing her emotionally with his love and forging Ovid into the perfect doctor. Most importantly, he gives Ovid this knowledge through legitimate and moral means. The dying man clarifies in his manuscript that

the information which is presented in these pages is wholly derived from the result of bedside practice; pursued under miserable obstacles and interruptions and spread over a period of many years. Whatever faults and failings I may have been guilty of as a man, I am innocent, in my professional capacity, of ever having perpetrated the useless and detestable cruelties which go by the name of Vivisection. (*HS* 307)

This statement is integral to Collins' antivivisectionist themes: vivisection functions destructively while attentive "bedside practice" serves to create knowledge through intersubjective encounters. The manuscript reveals the very knowledge that Benjulia has been labouring to discover in his laboratory. Benjulia, however, would never have made this discovery, as Collins suggests, because he has gone about his research the wrong way by practicing vivisection. While antivivisection was often dismissed as the result of female

sentimentality, vivisection was primarily defended due to its apparent usefulness but Collins counters that argument by highlighting the costs of this practice, instead positing that the cruel and immoral nature of vivisection actually inhibits genuine care for patients and keeps practitioners from knowledge especially when patients get reduced to object status.<sup>28</sup> Cobbe's own writing in "Vivisection and its Two-Faced Advocates" as well as Lewis Carroll's "Some Popular Fallacies about Vivisection" is reflected in Collins' questioning of the utility and selfishness of vivisection. Only through patience, care, love and attention to humanity can the doctor or man of science make his discoveries and only then can his discoveries be said to be truly for the sake of humanity. Carroll writes, "I believe that any branch of science, when taken up by one who has a natural turn for it, will soon become as fascinating as sport to the most ardent sportsman, or as any form of pleasure to the most refined sensualist" (346). This "fascination" suggests on one hand that the practice of vivisection will ultimately become a form of pleasurable sport rather than a method for scientific discovery. On the other hand, moral bedside practice, if practiced enough, could become a "fascination" itself and inspire doctors to further this actually beneficial method of care. Through the correlation of Benjulia's lack of compassion with the failure to conduct profitable research, Collins demonstrates the need to honour the fundamental interconnectedness of feeling and knowledge, body and spirit, and self and community, thus making it clear that only moral intersubjective practice yields benefits for others and oneself.

Through his ability to both rely on medical facts and to feel emotion and care for his patients, Ovid demonstrates the perfect combination of "heart" and "science." By bringing together emotion and logic, Ovid exemplifies how these two can work together in the new

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<sup>28</sup> See Buettinger and Ritvo for the dismissal of antivivisectionism as female sentimentality while Darwin and others such as Huxley defended the utility of vivisection.

scientific era. He does this when he heals Carmina with his love. Upon their reunion, she expresses the belief that she will die to which he replies: “You will live...My Carmina, what am I here for but to bring you back to life” (304). Ovid’s rhetorical question can be taken as both referring to “heart” and “science”—he gives her his love and his medical knowledge. Straley’s article discusses this relationship between love and vivisection through her argument that at first, “love resembles vivisection” (366). She argues that love, as shown by Ovid and Carmina’s first meeting and even Benjulia’s encounter with the highly excitable if delusional cook, requires a “corporeal invasion” like vivisection (365). When Ovid returns, however, Straley also points out that his romantic relationship with Carmina produces a means of cure that is “derived without vivisection and a love devoid of physicality” (367). To illustrate her point, she uses the example of Ovid holding Carmina’s hand, a typically romantic gesture he employs to actually monitor her pulse (Straley 367; *HS* 312). This example demonstrates the perfect blending of “heart” and “science” Ovid manages to achieve as he is neither too unfeeling as a doctor nor is he too preoccupied with the corporeal feelings of love as Straley suggests. As well, Ovid’s touch symbolizes his method of embodied care, one that is attentive to the signs and responses of the body unlike the practice of vivisection. In doing so, Collins revalues the material and physical body, demonstrating its ability to communicate and influence the mind. The body cannot be ignored in favour of the mind but rather should inform and contribute to the process of logical decision-making. Proper medical care, for Collins, is thus one that is connected to the body which also, as Sparks suggests, embraces “domesticity and morality” (14) and a doctor who practices this type of medical care is a proper masculine figure by extension.

The ending of the novel places Ovid in the position of proper and benevolent male patriarch whose care and love for others has made him deserving of this position. Collins

deviates from typical Victorian conceptions of masculinity as active, resolute, and logical to prescribe a new form of manhood that incorporates care, compassion and forgiveness. In their final meeting, Ovid's "large heart" feels compassion for Benjulia despite knowing how he treated Carmina (*HS* 320). When Mr. Gallilee voices his concern over how his wife will live in debt, Mr. Mool reveals "If she needs money, the kindest man in the world has offered me a blank cheque to fill in for her—and his name is Ovid Vere" (326). By doing so, Ovid not only demonstrates his kind and forgiving nature but establishes himself as patriarch who takes care all of those under his 'cover.' He takes this position from Mr. Gallilee himself, the father figure who is too weak and ineffectual to take on this responsibility.<sup>29</sup> As such, Ovid is granted a happy ending—he marries Carmina and the novel closes on a scene of the married couple hosting a dinner party with their family gathered around them, even Teresa who is now the Vere's housekeeper (326). This scene represents Collins' reconfiguration of masculinity which both destabilizes and affirms the status quo. His new definition of masculinity as kind and caring is potentially destabilizing yet results in merely a benevolent form of patriarchy. Tamara S. Wagner argues Collins' shift from "heroic masculinity to praiseworthy physical delicacy, which figures as a sign of moral strength, is connected to a sentimental reaffirmation of lovesickness and happy endings" (471). In addition, I would suggest that Collins is attempting to disrupt the relation between masculinity and scientific indifference by portraying a very different type of masculine figure who is still engaged in scientific occupation but does so in a moral way. In viewing the novel this way, readers can see how Collins' antivivisectionist polemic is not just about the practice of vivisection or medicine but the way these practices reflect and inform the masculine identity itself.

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<sup>29</sup> Mr. Gallilee, as the exact opposite of his scientific-minded wife, could be seen as purely "heart." Through his character, Collins show that while being too scientific-minded is not effective, neither is being too sensitive or nervous. Ovid is thus the representation of the perfect blend of science and logic with emotion and sensitivity.

Conclusion:

In *Heart and Science*, Collins enters the debate over which lives were expendable, demonstrating that typically animalized and feminized methods of knowledge such as instinct and intuition can actually be valuable and have a power of their own. By writing a novel, he is able to offer up a vision of society as it is but also as it could be—with doctors and men like Ovid Vere who harmoniously blends logic and emotion in his practice of genuine care rather than vivisectioning scientists like Benjulia. For feminists, Collins' ending may not go far enough in destabilizing patriarchy as it could be viewed as still showing women to be subordinate to men and certain men like Ovid as actually deserving of their authority by being proper masculine figures. In terms of the female characters, Zo may possess a sort of child's agency; however, Carmina is incapacitated through much of the novel and is acted on rather than exhibiting her own agency. These same issues appear in Collins' earlier novel, *The Woman in White*, which, despite being written about twenty years earlier, builds on Collins' vision of the power of emotion and intuition and also takes on constructions of superiority and inferiority in society as will be explored in the next chapter. For Collins himself, *Heart and Science* reminded him of the power and strength he put into his earlier novel. In a letter to a close friend, he wrote, "Some critic said *The Woman in White* 'was written in blood and vitriol.' This book [*Heart and Science*] is being written in blood and dynamite" (Wilkie Collins's July 5, 1882 letter 371). Other early critics also made comparisons between the two novels, labelling Benjulia "not an unworthy brother of Count Fosco" (*Pall Mall Budget* 332) and claiming he came to "match" Fosco as a "popular demon" (Lycett 387). In both novels, Collins devoted his energy to defending women,

animals and their subordinate positions in society which leave them completely vulnerable to the cruelties of men. In the next chapter, I aim to demonstrate the way *The Woman in White* continues to nuance issues of emotion and logic brought up in *Heart and Science* and represents women as stronger, more defiant actors in their own lives as well as on behalf of other women.

Chapter 3: Of Cockatoos and Counts: The Treatment of Women and Animals by the Villain in  
*The Woman in White*



Figure 1

On April 6<sup>th</sup>, 1861, *Punch* magazine published a cartoon drawing entitled “Awful Apparition” in which a wife, dressed entirely in white bedclothes, surprises her husband who is reading *The Woman in White* at night (App. C4 639). The husband’s nervous reaction—he drops the book and stares at her with fear—perfectly encapsulates the engrossing nature of the novel’s plot but also its ability to evoke sensational, emotional, or even irrational responses. The comic is particularly interesting in its reversal of typical gender roles in that the reader of the newly emerging ‘sensation novel’ is male and a husband who, through the sensational subject matter of the novel, is rendered so nervous, anxious and distraught that his hair, disheveled around his surprised eyebrows, makes him look like an animal. By contrast, his wife, whose rigid stance is suggestive of her own morally upright behaviour, exhibits her rationality by drawing attention to the lateness of the hour and unsuitability of his behaviour. The Victorian husband should be upstairs either asleep or proving his masculine heterosexuality through reproduction with his

wife, not reading a morally and aesthetically questionable sensation novel. *Punch*'s comic signifies the subversive potential of *The Woman in White* in the novel's ability to engage and shock readers, forcing them to connect with their own emotive responses and to "make the mind [seem] physical and the body seem conscious" (Ryan 54). A modern critic of sensation fiction, Tara McDonald, points out that women were most often the readers of these novels and thus sensation fiction was considered dangerous because women readers would "be unable to separate their own desires from those of sensation heroines" (128); however, "Awful Apparition" shows that females were not the only ones who sympathized with sensation heroines. Through the novels, men too could share the feelings typically attributed to women and animals—frightened, nervous, and attuned to the body's responses—and become aware of what Vanessa Ryan calls "unconscious and automatic actions of the mind" (51). Collins' ability to affect various readers is what made his writing so powerfully able to forward his controversial criticism of the structures of Victorian society. In *The Woman in White*, Collins foreshadows his later work in *Heart and Science* by exposing the comparable cultural positioning of women and non-human animals through his construction of his famous villain, Count Fosco.

In this chapter, I will examine the cultural equation of women and animals as it extends far beyond and more deeply into the cultural consciousness than the antivivisection movement. I will begin by analyzing Fosco's particular type of villainy which deviates not only significantly from the indifferent Benjulia but also from Sir Percival Glyde, the other obvious villain of the novel. Sir Percival's short temper and physical violence towards animals mirrors his cruel treatment of his wife and allows readers to immediately identify him as a villain. In contrast, Fosco's character is defined by his fondness and apparently loving and attentive relationship with his pet animals, a cockatoo and some mice. His ability to attract and tame these pets is then



replicated in his marriage with the subservient and submissive Madame Fosco. Drawing on Marlene Tromp's work in *The Private Rod*, I will posit that Fosco's taming of women and animals is a more insidious and effective manner of control than outright brutality because it relegates 'inferior' beings to mere objects of his manipulation while appearing to sympathize with them. A complete understanding of Fosco's brand of villainy is thus reached when he ruthlessly plans Laura Fairlie's murder and exposes how women are disposable and interchangeable to him just as in the case of Benjulia and his experimentation on Carmina.

Turning my focus to the female characters, I will then suggest that Collins' portrayal of Laura and to a greater extent, Marian Halcombe, goes beyond his portrayal of Carmina in *Heart and Science* in that they are more than just victims saved only by the actions of a man. While Laura is often dismissed by critics as a weak, uninteresting character who merely represents the stereotypical Victorian wife, I will attempt to recuperate her from this conception and instead, build on the work of Suzanne Rintoul who claims that the silence, nervousness, and "blankness" the narrative assigns to Laura are more than markers of derided femininity: indeed, her "blankness" and silence implies "resistance to and disavowal of the very language" of patriarchy and its violence against women (113). My argument will focus on Laura's use of instincts as a form of knowledge and her subtle resistance specifically to being treated as an inferior animal rather than a capable, equal human being in both of her marriages. Female resistance is then furthered by Marian who positions herself as a worthy adversary to the men through her ability to combine feminine instinct and masculine logic and her superior detective skills. Marian wins respect and admiration from the characters of the novel and readers alike through her strength and power and these qualities ultimately allow her to succeed in protecting her sister.<sup>30</sup> In his presentation of Marian's character, Collins portrays women as outspoken protectors of each

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<sup>30</sup> As I will prove in more detail later, Marian was particularly well received by readers—even men.

other and their protests refer to more than the issue of vivisection or animal welfare but the treatment of those labeled inferior based on the constructed ideals of superiority and inferiority in society. Therefore, *The Woman in White* exposes the comparable cultural positioning of women and animals as subjects to the cruelty of men as well as women's resistance to this equation as taking place beyond the level of one singular movement and extending to a wider discussion of the treatment of those who are devalued in society.

### The Count as Villain:

While Dr. Benjulia is the undesirable villain of *Heart and Science*, Count Fosco complicates notions of villainy through his ability to appeal to and attract his victims—he is clearly a threat yet is not completely undesirable. He shares with Benjulia the suspect status of being a foreigner in England and of possessing medical skills that allow him control over the health and lives of others. Near the end of the novel, Fosco demonstrates a prowess for chemistry and medical care when Marian falls ill, which links him to the 'man of science' in Victorian society as well as the figure of the vivisector (*WinW* 375). Fosco does encapsulate some of the traits of a vivisector—Tamar Heller compares Fosco to Mary Shelley's Victor Frankenstein, another scientist and vivisector, who also "turn[s] people into objects" (130). Fosco, however, differs from both Frankenstein and Benjulia in his apparent sensibility and sympathy for animals. Marian describes,

Fat as he is, and old as he is, his movements are astonishingly light and easy. He is as noiseless in a room as any of us women; and, more than that, with all his look of unmistakeable mental firmness and power, he is as nervously sensitive as the weakest of us. He starts at chance noises as inveterately as Laura herself. He winced and shuddered yesterday, when Sir Percival beat one of the spaniels so

that I felt ashamed of my own want of tenderness and sensibility by comparison with the Count. (242)

Here, Fosco's nervous sensitivity endows him with stereotypically feminine traits and even renders him comparable to "Laura herself," the most typically feminine, weak and even child-like character in the novel.<sup>31</sup> He also breaks down the binary of masculine logic and female emotion by combining both "mental firmness and power" as well as "nervous[ness]" and "[sensitivity]." As Monica Flegel argues, Fosco can be considered an "essentially queer figure" ("Pets and Patriarchy" 125) and while Flegel concentrates on how his characterization reflects on masculinity, I would suggest that Fosco's effeminacy or "queerness," which is brought out by his sensitivity to animals, displays the cultural equation of women and animals in Victorian England.<sup>32</sup> Collins makes Fosco, a male patriarch, share in the alignment of women and animals which assumes an affinity or sympathy between these two groups. When Fosco "wince[s]" and "shudder[s]" upon witnessing his friend beat a spaniel, he suggests that he feels sympathy for the animal, even experiences its pain. He also separates himself from the figure of the vivisector who willingly and indifferently inflicts pain upon the animal or feminized subject. Fosco's display of sensibility leaves Marian feeling "ashamed" of her own inability to sympathize with the beaten dog as much as Fosco does. Marian's shame is telling for readers who might assume because she is a woman who is in a comparable position in the household and in society to the animal, she should sympathize. Fosco is thus better able to perform feminine sensibility than Marian, reversing the typical assumed pattern of female-animal sympathy. By showing sympathy and

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<sup>31</sup> While Laura is often labelled this way by critics (see Auerbach, O'Neill, and Surridge, among others), I will work to redeem Laura later in this chapter, incorporating arguments made by Suzanne Rintoul, that Laura does resist and show strength in her own way while enduring extreme suffering and trauma. The comparison made here between Laura's and Fosco's nervousness, however, still functions to render Fosco effeminate.

<sup>32</sup> Fosco is not the only character who troubles conventional gender boundaries. Various critics such as D.A. Miller and Rachel Ablow note how characters like Marian, Frederick Fairlie, and Walter do not fully subscribe to stereotypical Victorian conceptions of gender. As seen in *Heart and Science*, Collins enjoys breaking down gender binaries.

emotion for the animal and being “nervously sensitive”—connected to the sensations of his body—Fosco exhibits not only stereotypical but also exaggerated feminine qualities. For readers, his effeminacy and sensibility suggests an alternate dominance to that practiced by Sir Percival which might complicate how readers judge him as undesirable. If he is unable to witness a dog being beaten without reacting emotionally, this reaction seems to suggest he would act similarly to seeing a woman being abused or misused by another man which contrasts with *Heart and Science*’s Benjulia who easily transfers his experimentation on animals to women patients. Despite the fact he is dangerous, Fosco’s apparent sympathy with women and animals as well as his connection to his emotions complicate not only constructions of gender but the definition of the villain as obviously undesirable or brutal.

Other than sympathy for the beaten dog, Fosco also has an “extraordinary fondness for pet animals” whom he values as subjects under his total control and manipulation (242). He has a “cockatoo, two canary-birds, and a whole family of white mice. He attends to all the necessities of these strange favourites himself, and he has taught the creatures to be surprisingly fond of him, and familiar with him” (242). Fosco’s fondness for his pets not only contrasts Sir Percival’s brutality towards them; but also suggests a paternal care for his ‘children’ (Flegel, “Pets and Patriarchy” 130). Flegel states that Fosco’s “animal children” become “a means of subterfuge by which he passes as a kindly paternalistic figure and as an alibi for his more underhanded actions” (130). Displays of fondness, in other words, serve as Fosco’s prime means of control, meaning that while he may not be a vivisector who physically cuts into the bodies of animals or women, he does manipulate and hold power over them. Marian also clearly makes the distinction in her description that Fosco has “*taught* the creatures to be surprisingly fond of him” which suggests that he has conditioned his pets to feel a fondness and affection for him that may not necessarily

be a natural affect (*Win W* 242 emphasis added). Rather than representing Fosco and his pets as a sincere loving relationship, Collins (through Marian's narrative) introduces coercion and manipulation. Through these coercive displays of fondness, Fosco will come to control his wife; however, his behaviour clearly differs from that of his friend, Sir Percival, in terms of overt brutality.

Sir Percival's abuse and cruelty towards animals symbolizes his abuse and cruelty towards women, particularly his wife Laura. He serves as a foil to Fosco as the way women and animals react to him situates him as the obvious and immediate villain of the novel. While animals such as the pet cockatoo and mice seem to adore Fosco, Sir Percival's villainy is signaled early in the novel, long before readers see how he behaves in his own home, when he visits Limmeridge House and Laura's pet greyhound Nina immediately dislikes him: "The little beast...looked up at him sharply, shrank away from his outstretched hand, whined, shivered, and hid itself under a sofa" (164). Later, the dog "poke[s] out her sharp muzzle from under the sofa, and bark[s] and snap[s] at him" (166). In the first instance, Nina is clearly scared of Sir Percival as she sees him and immediately "shrinks" away from his touch. His intentions appear to be friendly but the image of his "outstretched hand" can also be perceived as threatening, foreshadowing Sir Percival's later acts of violence such as beating the spaniel or bruising Laura's arm. The hand connotes violence and this is clearly what Nina expects to receive from Sir Percival, rather than a friendly or affectionate pat. Her second reaction, the "barking," "snapping," and the use of her "sharp muzzle" indicates that she has retreated in a defensive stance, prepared to protect herself and even her mistress from his advances. Nina acts on instinct and feeling rather than reason or logic. Sir Percival has not yet performed any actions to make him suspicious at this point, yet Nina's reaction indicates he is to be feared. D.A. Miller, writing

on the relationship between sensation and gender in the novel, observes that Nina's reaction plays into the genre of sensation fiction and, as a result, readers consider this "unimpeachable evidence" (160). The strength of her evidence is further reinforced when she reappears in Laura's interview with Mr. Gilmore, the trusted family lawyer, and she "jump[s] into [his] lap, and poke[s] its sharp muzzle familiarly into [his] hand" (*WinW* 171). Her actions prompt Mr. Gilmore to remark to Laura: "You used often to sit on my knee when you were a child...now your little dog seems determined to succeed you in the vacant throne" (171). The description of Nina's friendly reaction to Mr. Gilmore directly contrasts with that of her reaction to Sir Percival. The repetition of "sharp muzzle" draws together this contrast as in the instance with Sir Percival she uses it to threaten him, snapping at him aggressively whereas with Mr. Gilmore, she settles her muzzle into his hand, showing she feels safe and not under the threat of violence with him. Nina's behaviour also reflects that of Laura who "used often to sit on [Gilmore's] knee" which suggests that Nina's and Laura's feelings and affections are in sync with one another—a sympathy exists between them. While readers may consider that Nina's behaviour supplies both "unimpeachable" evidence of Sir Percival's villainy and Mr. Gilmore's trustworthiness, the characters in the novel do not and instead devalue emotion and instinct in order to privilege logic and rationality (Miller 160). Marian, for example, distrusts Sir Percival despite receiving Mrs. Catherick's handwritten note exculpating him from responsibility for locking up Anne Catherick in an insane asylum and yet she dismisses her suspicions as "only a fancy" in front of the logical, factual Mr. Gilmore (*WinW* 166). Women as well as animals therefore could rely on their emotions and instincts to warn them of danger as Nina does when she shrinks away from Sir Percival's touch. Collins demonstrates, however, that the devalued 'feminized' or 'animalistic' reliance on sensation and instinct can actually be correct and he forces his readers to similarly

rely on these emotions. Readers, fashioned to believe logic and reason are the higher faculties on which they should rely, nevertheless suspect what Marian suspects, what Nina suspects—that Sir Percival is dangerous and not be trusted.<sup>33</sup> Miller argues that “allegedly masculine” readers are forced into an “effectively feminine gender identification” by the drama of the plot (163).<sup>34</sup> Collins forces this identification in order to redeem emotion and instinct as legitimate forms of knowledge as readers and “characters who rely on utterly unlegal standards of evidence like intuition, coincidence, literary connotation get closer to what will eventually be revealed as truth” (Miller 159). Feminine, animalized forms of knowledge provide access to truth in a way that masculine logic and reason cannot, however, because Victorian society has denigrated these methods, Sir Percival is given the benefit of being trusted by the other characters. Thus, Sir Percival is immediately and obviously situated as villain through his relationship with animals who judge with instinct and reveals that he poses a threat to women.

While Sir Percival and Fosco contrast each other in terms of their relationships with animals, with both men Collins employs the use of animals or animalistic imagery to depict wife abuse.<sup>35</sup> Much like the vivisector whose cruel and indifferent experimentation on the bodies of animals led to the concern that these experiments could easily be transferred to the bodies of women, the psychological and physical abuse of these men is exemplified through their treatment of animals. This abuse could be seen as an early signifier of the type of cruelty that vivisection encapsulated in the debates that dominated later in the century. For instance, when Marian tells readers that Fosco “wince[s]” and “shudder[s]” “when Sir Percival beat one of the

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<sup>33</sup> Critics such as Ryan, Rintoul, Cvetkovich and Miller (as mentioned) all note the poignancy of emotional insights. Interestingly, Ryan refers to these emotional kind of insights as “unconscious cerebration” which “work[s] outside of awareness” and “[delivers] its results to the conscious mind” in an instant (37). Ryan argues that “this type of mental activity is different from—and in some instances far superior to—conscious, rational, logical thought” (38).

<sup>34</sup> See also Nicholas Dames’ *The Physiology of the Novel* for more information on how Victorians read and how their bodies and minds were stimulated by the novel.

<sup>35</sup> This argument is the center of Surridge’s work and discussed also by Rintoul and Tromp.

spaniels,” she does not just reveal Fosco’s sensibility but also Percival’s cruelty (*WinW* 242). Lisa Surridge, in her article “Dogs’/Bodies, Women’s Bodies,” discusses the unspeakability of marital abuse in the Victorian era particularly in the middle to upper class which caused the “deflection of marital violence from the body of the woman onto the body of a domestic animal—often a dog...the beating or wounding of an animal by the husband indirectly suggests the presence of abuse, in the marriage” (4). As Surridge goes on to explain, “the conflation of dogs’ bodies with the women’s bodies in nineteenth-century narratives invites readers to reflect on a man’s ‘ownership’ or control over his spouse, an issue which was crucial in the legal arguments concerning the husband’s traditional right to confine and/or physically discipline his wife” (4). Surridge draws out this argument by referencing the scene in *The Woman in White* where Marian discovers Mrs. Catherick’s bleeding, dying dog in the boat-house (230) and linking this to Laura’s bruised arms later (317). Here, Surridge reads the bodies of animals and women as connected and interchangeable—the abuse or pain applied to one reflects or stands in for that of the other. In this reading, she specifically deals with women’s and animal’s relationship in terms of marriage and in the domestic sphere; however, this “conflation” of bodies extends farther out than the home as evidenced by the antivivisection movement which would take place a few years after the publication of this novel. The dog’s body in this scene which bears witness to female pain also, Surridge argues, could potentially signify further suffering of the female:

Given that Sir Percival does bruise Laura, are we to understand the wounding of the spaniel as a foreshadowing of this event [Laura’s bruised arms], a kind of prophetic injury of the woman’s body? If so, it is remarkable how greatly the injury to the dog outweighs Laura’s bruise: the dog it is, so to speak, that dies...the spaniel’s wound may represent an injury to Laura which is *never directly represented* in the text...does the spaniel sob and bleed to represent an unseen wounding of the absent Laura? (26 original emphasis)



In this case, the shared status of women and animals extends to the animal body actually being able to communicate what must not be spoken in the text or society in general. Surridge also evokes the idea that women and animals both occupy the cultural position of silence or of being voiceless. While animals do have voices of their own just as women do, both voices are ignored and discounted in society. As well, the death of Mrs. Catherick's dog foreshadows the abuse and violence women will experience at Blackwater Park along with the silencing of Anne Catherick who, like the dog, becomes a victim of the connection between her mother and Sir Percival. Percival's evident brutality towards animals when he returns to Blackwater reflects both what abuse is evident and what abuse could potentially be unrepresented in his marriage to Laura. By using animals to represent (and not represent) the abuse of women, Collins exposes how women were treated as inferior beings, subject to the cruelty of men, and considered as voiceless as an animal while men established dominance and superiority through this cruelty. Anticipating *Heart and Science*, Collins creates Sir Percival and Laura's relationship in the model of that of a master and pet—a troubling alignment which elevated men to the status of superior beings while women were classed as inferior and contributed to the formation of the vivisection controversy.

Fosco uses different methods of villainy than either Sir Percival or Benjulia; however, his menacing ability to tame and attract animals is also replicated in his relationship with Madame Fosco. Before her marriage, Madame Fosco “was always talking pretentious nonsense, and always worrying the unfortunate men with every small exaction which a vain and foolish woman can impose on long-suffering male humanity” (239). This description by Marian ventriloquizes patriarchal views of ‘chatty’ women who speak only “nonsense” and annoy the men around them. Marian's exaggerated tone of the men's affliction which is “unfortunate” and “long-suffering” becomes ironic when juxtaposed with how Madame Fosco is transformed by her

marriage. Once married, Madame Fosco is described in animalistic terms as an owned, submissive creature. Marian describes how she will sit “frozen up in the strangest manner in herself” and her eyes “are generally turned on her husband, with the look of mute submissive inquiry which we are all familiar with in the eyes of a faithful dog” (239). The eyes are important since they can be associated with the gendered gaze or a way for women to assert their power by physically looking back at the man. Instead, Madame Fosco’s eyes are “mute,” “submissive,” and “turned on her husband” with reverence as if she is worshipping him. Marian equates her expression with that of a pet dog which is dehumanizing and the “faithful[ness]” in her eyes shows her attachment to her husband while also suggesting she has been tamed, domesticated, and is now subservient to her master just like a household pet. Her “frozen up” character contrasts strongly with Marian’s description of her earlier behaviour of loose and animated conversation and this suggests that Fosco’s rule has stripped her of her identity similar to the way Fosco and Sir Percival literally strip Laura of hers.

While Fosco has clearly “tamed this once wayward Englishwoman” (240), he has not done so through explicit violence or Sir Percival’s use of brutality but by treating her with the same fondness he exhibits towards his pets: “He bows to her; he habitually addresses her as ‘my angel’; he carries his canaries to pay her little visits on his fingers, and to sing to her; he kisses her hand, when she gives him his cigarettes; he presents her with sugar-plums” (244). From this description, Fosco appears to cater to his wife and to fulfill the role of the proper gentleman who treats all fellow creatures, animals and wives, as beings who are worthy of respect, affection and kindness. His bowing and kissing her hand even connotes *his* submission to *her* in public which is not the case in private. His behaviour is also like that of a master to his pet as he rewards her for fulfilling her duties as faithful and submissive wife, equating her with Fosco’s “strange

favourites” whom he cares for and treats with affection.<sup>36</sup> This behaviour, however, is associated with manipulation or even infantilization as his wife, demonstrating a master/slave dynamic where his kindness only occurs when she submits to his will. Thus, while appearing in public to be extremely different from the Glydes’ marriage, their relationship also involves coercion, dominance and abuse. After describing both Madame and Count Fosco, Marian states, “The rod of iron with which he rules her never appears in company—it is a private rod, and is always kept up-stairs” (244). In her book, Marlene Tromp places this quotation at the centre of her analyses, stating that “the concealed rod remains outside the bounds of legislative and social authority, and indeed, its haunting presence amplifies its power” (83). She contrasts the “concealed rod” of Fosco with the walking cane of Sir Percival which functions as a literal “weapon” (80). The “visibility” of Percival’s abuse leaves him “open to attack on several fronts” (77) whereas Fosco’s private rod is “an acceptable alternative to Percival’s exhibitionist violence” that cannot be punished by “legislative and social authority” (83). While the private rod to which Marian refers is meant to be figurative, the image of a “rod of iron” (*WinW* 244) does not just have a “haunting presence” as Tromp suggests, but rather, connotes very real violence and reminds readers of Sir Percival’s beating of the house spaniel as well as other cruelty. Fosco’s cruelty, however, is private or secret (like Benjulia’s secret laboratory) and is not displayed in public view. Rintoul argues Fosco “represents the power of violence that is difficult to detect” and “he gets what he wants because he disguises the violence of his methods” (110). Therefore, Fosco employs cruel practices in his relationship with his wife, just as Sir Percival does with Laura and Benjulia does with his laboratory animals and his cook. Similarly to Laura and the dying dog

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<sup>36</sup> Marlene Tromp in *The Private Rod* also points out how Fosco rewards his wife “with treats from his pocket when she has performed appropriately” as she unpacks Fosco’s regiment of “Propriety, Patience, Peace” in managing those around him (83). I do so here to demonstrate the similar positioning of Madame Fosco and Fosco’s pets in their relationships to the male patriarch, Fosco.

Marian discovers in the boathouse, the cruelty or abuse that Madame Fosco endures is not represented or goes unspoken. Madame Fosco's suffering is communicated instead through the image of Fosco's pets, particularly his mice, whom he instructs to "never gnaw at the bars of your cage again as long as you live" (255). This image demonstrates Madame Fosco's powerless and Fosco's convincing methods of controlling the women in his life.

In his performance of an effeminate masculinity, Fosco differs from aggressive patriarchs "only in respect to the tools he uses to support his authority" (Flegel *QVF* 105). Tromp identifies Fosco's superior villainy of "polite public gestures paired with the threat of private violence" (84) as more effective than Sir Percival because "By setting himself publicly at odds with the women in the novel, Percival merely provokes their ire, engages them in active resistance, and moves into the range of the law's reach, rather than forcing them to succumb" (85). When Sir Percival locks Laura in her room and leaves the servant Margaret Porcher to stand guard (*WinW* 311), Marian "walk[s] straight up to him, and look[s] him full in the face", unafraid and defiant rather than submissive (*WinW* 312). Sir Percival's brute force is thus ineffective and he is forced to relent, especially when Madame Fosco also stands up to him at Fosco's instruction. Laura is made "mistress again in her own house" (313), suggesting she is at liberty and invested with enough power to run it. Laura's freedom, however, comes only at the request of Fosco and not through Laura's inherent liberty in her house or even, as it may appear, Marian's or Madame Fosco's protests. As well, Fosco is the messenger of the news that Laura is "mistress again" and by informing Marian himself, he reveals he is the real actor behind this decision. Laura is thus not "mistress" at all but now under the dominion of Fosco like one of his pets and his wife. Fosco, not Sir Percival, is thus the most powerful and ultimately in control of how the women are treated.

Fosco can be compared to Frederick Fairlie who uses sentiment as a form of control, claiming his sensitive nerves and delicate health as an excuse to dismiss the calls on his attention. By appealing to typically ‘feminine’ qualities such as nerves, Frederick avoids his duties as patriarch and thereby places Laura, his ward, in a dangerous situation as she marries without a marriage settlement (*WinW* 189-190). Fosco similarly appeals to typically feminine qualities and thus actually *appears* to share in the sympathy between women and animals whereas Sir Percival is blatantly violent and antagonistic. Fosco is even *liked* by the women even though he is dangerous as Marian must admit that “I do assuredly feel...a strange, half-willing, half-unwilling liking for the Count. He seems to have established over me the same sort of ascendancy which he has evidently gained over Sir Percival” and others (246). A.D. Hutter, writing on Count Fosco, claims, “Marian herself sets the tone for the reader, finding Fosco irresistibly charming in spite of what she knows to be his sometimes odious morality. It is indeed difficult for us, like Marian, not to be charmed and delighted with Fosco” (202-203). Readers are thus connected to the women and animals in the novel through their mutual enjoyment and even submission to Fosco despite his villainy. Fosco’s use of subterfuge and apparently sympathetic qualities may make Percival appear like the more obvious, more detestable villain but readers soon discover that these characteristics only mask a more dangerous and cunning man.

The extent of Fosco’s true villainy is further revealed when Marian overhears Fosco and Sir Percival’s conversation in the library as Fosco ruthlessly discusses Laura’s murder. While he may shudder at the physical abuse of animals, he does not display any qualms about discussing the murder of another human being. In a private conversation, Fosco and Sir Percival discuss how they will pay their debts given Laura’s refusal to sign away her money. Fosco says to his friend, “I speak of your wife’s death, as I speak of a possibility. Why not?...It is my business to-

night, to clear up your position beyond the possibility of mistake—and I have now done it. Here is your position. If your wife lives, you pay those bills with her signature to the parchment. If your wife dies, you pay them with her death” (*WinW* 343). Here, Fosco is ruthless and callous instead of sensitive and sympathetic. He speaks of Laura’s death as a “possibility” for them, showing his lack of regard for human life. Fosco functions as a sort of “business” advisor to his friend in that he speaks of another human’s death the same way he would a business transaction. He does not show concern for human life as he trivializes Laura’s death when he says “Why not?” While Fosco makes no explicit connection between the lives of women and the lives of animals, his indifference towards whether Laura lives or dies—the way he views her as disposable for his own means—reflects the same mindset of a vivisector. Collins demonstrates in *Heart and Science* how Benjulia, the male vivisector, views the animal body as merely an object or method through which he can further his own goals by making his scientific discovery and he then easily transfers this view of the animal body to the female body of his patient Carmina. Fosco views Laura in this same manner as her body and her life are valuable only as means to his own ends. Sir Percival is shocked by Fosco’s suggestion, even stating that Fosco “make[s] [his] flesh creep” (343). Percival’s feeling here is a reversal of the previously established villain roles as it is he who is shocked by the thought of a murder, a clearly violent act, and not Fosco. He also reacts with his emotions and sensations, exhibiting a physical, visceral response—the “creep[ing]” of his flesh—to Fosco’s suggestion, placing him in a feminized position who reacts according to sensations rather than logic. Fosco, in contrast, is highly logical and business-like in his approach despite showing himself to be sensible and feeling. By juxtaposing Fosco’s affection for his animals with his cruelty towards Laura in this scene, Collins exposes Fosco’s

true villainy in that he uses his sensibility and his ability to both attract and tame women and animals to manipulate those around him for his own gain.

Collins thus presents a more insidious type of villainy in Fosco who disguises his subordination and manipulation of women and animals as sympathy.<sup>37</sup> Fosco himself recognizes these two ways of handling women and animals, firstly acknowledging Sir Percival's methods of outright violence then goes on to say:<sup>38</sup>

The other way (much longer, much more difficult, but in the end, not less certain) is never to accept a provocation at a woman's hands. It holds with animals, it holds with children, and it holds with women... Quiet resolution is the one quality the animals, the children, and the women all fail in. If they can once shake this superior quality in their master, they get the better of *him*. If they can never succeed in disturbing it, he gets the better of *them*. (*WinW* 339 original emphasis).

Here, the comparison between women and animals is explicit as Fosco deals with both groups in the exact same fashion of "quiet resolution."<sup>39</sup> Fosco's speech strips women of their humanity by equating their behaviour with corporal being considered inferior to men. He repeats the language of a master-pet relationship found in Marian's description of him and Madame Fosco's marriage to discuss general relations between men and women. Men are superior, especially if they can maintain their "quiet resolution," a phrase which once again devalues emotions and sensations. Therefore, Fosco reveals that his sensitivity, displays of affection and kindness are all designed to demonstrate that he will not accept provocation or be shaken out of his quiet resolution. He

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<sup>37</sup> Critics such as Ablow, Miller, Heller, and Tromp would suggest that Collins actually presents a third villain or, at the very least, another man who controls representation in the text and operates similarly to Fosco—Walter Hartright. Ablow in *The Marriage of Minds* suggests Walter is compared to Fosco in his performance of sympathetic identification with Laura and I will discuss later in this chapter how his treatment of her once married is even comparable to that of Sir Percival.

<sup>38</sup> Wollstonecraft already made the argument that society perfidiously invested women with the same status as pets in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1792. With the increasing of scientific experiment and approaching issue of vivisection, Collins re-introduces the similar status of women and animals as possessing even more potential danger in the late nineteenth century. This cultural moment was also one with the potential for change for women as demonstrated in the first chapter of this thesis.

<sup>39</sup> Fosco's inclusion of children in this quotation is significant in *Heart and Science* where the relationship between the child Zo and the vivisectioner Benjulia both foreshadows his treatment of women as experimental subjects and reveals a sense of latent humanity.

treats women like his pet animals in that he asserts his dominance over them and forces them to submit to his will to such an extent that they internalize and appear to even enjoy their subjugation and worship their ‘master.’ Fosco’s brand of villainy is not only more effective than Sir Percival’s but also more dangerous than Benjulia’s because it shows how the equation of women and animals extends beyond the antivivisection movement of late nineteenth century. Instead, as evidenced by the writings of Wollstonecraft and Cobbe, the view that women and animals were similar permeated cultural consciousness to such an extent that it became a part of everyday life. In an article called “Outrages on Women” by the *North British Review*, the unsigned author discusses men’s treatment of women as motivated by “an overweening sense of his own superiority” which is thus “degrading to the other sex” (451). The author claims that men either treat a woman as literally an “inferior animal, strong in endurance, to be buffeted, and persecuted, and outraged, and humiliated, and made to suffer every kind of wrong” or “as a child or an invalid, incapable of self-assertion and self-defence, indeed, of all independent action” (451). These conceptions of women reinforced the laws of coverture that Caroline Norton protested against in “A Letter to the Queen” and showed that before the antivivisection debates, the correlation of women with animal, corporal or ‘inferior’ being was implicit in the construction of society. Thus, *The Woman in White* predicts the issue of the comparably inferior positioning of women and animals that is raised during the antivivisection movement by depicting this alignment as taking place before the movement and potentially even afterwards. Collins’ later *Heart and Science* shows that he was directly concerned with the treatment of women and animals in society and he was not just concerned about vivisection but the treatment of those considered “inferior” in general in society, particularly women and animals, by those in positions of power and dominance. To combat understandings of women and animals as inferior,



he shows the ruthlessness and corruption of the dominant men as well as the resistance of the female characters in *The Woman in White*.

Female Resistance: Laura and Marian:

In the character of Laura Fairlie, Collins demonstrates the cruelty women experience at the hands of men and exposes the status of the vulnerable Victorian wife who is similar to that of a child or pet dependent on and subject to their master. Despite evidence of Laura's capability, she is continually depicted in this same manner and deemed useless by both other characters and critics because she is a woman and does not subscribe to culturally authorized forms of knowledge. Various critics have recognized Laura as merely a stereotypical Victorian woman who fulfills the Angel in the House ideals which Maria K. Bachman and Don Richard Cox, in their introduction to the novel, define as an "idealized notion of feminine virtue, the Victorian woman was expected to be submissive, selfless, and wholly dependent upon her husband" (29). Bachman and Cox discuss how this stereotype "stripped Victorian women of their individuality" and therefore renders Laura as a wife as an "ultimately a pathetic figure" (29). Critics usually examine Laura's pleasing femininity in contrast with Marian's resolute masculinity and as such, Laura is often labelled as the less compelling character who does not inspire much loyalty or attachment from readers (Surridge *BH* 161). Surridge writes of her, "Passive, irresolute, dependent on her nurse, her sister, her future husband, and her guardian, Laura personifies the submissive wife promoted by conventional ideology" (161). Nina Auerbach agrees that Laura is a "nebulous, incompetent heroine" (135) and claims that "Laura becomes dissembling, cowed, and ultimately infantilized by her marriage" (141). While Philip O'Neill comments on Laura

only passingly, he reads her as one who is victimized because of her “essentially trusting nature; she is unaware of contradiction and complication, life for her exists on the surface and she has little need to believe ill of anyone or anything...Laura’s tragedy is a result of her habit of accepting things at face value” (99). Indeed, the descriptions of Laura given by the other characters in the novel appear to confirm this view of her. Fosco also contrasts her with the “magnificent” and “grand creature” that is Marian by labelling her as “that poor flimsy pretty blonde wife of [Sir Percival’s]” (*WinW* 340), which again emphasizes her weak femininity as well as how she is defined in terms of her relationship to men. Walter’s first description of her depicts her as a womanly, angelic ideal and he even struggles to come up with a substantive portrait of her: “How can I describe her? How can I separate her from my own sensations, from all that has happened in the later time?” (89).<sup>40</sup> While he does not struggle to give an in depth description of Marian’s appearance and character, he cannot seem to formulate the words to describe Laura, which suggests he does not recognize her individuality. He cannot “separate her” from his “own sensations,” reflecting that “rather than being a body” Laura is “the complete embodiment of [Walter’s] desire” (Cvetkovich 84). Laura is thus always defined by her relationship to the men in her life, either Sir Percival or Walter Hartright, who both coincidentally become her husbands.<sup>41</sup> In terms of her outward appearance, Walter emphasizes how it perfectly communicates her pleasing femininity. Her hair is

so faint and pale a brown...the eyes are of that soft, limpid, turquoise blue, so often sung by the poets, so seldom seen in real life. Lovely eyes in colour, lovely eyes in form—large and tender and quietly thoughtful—but beautiful above all things in the clear truthfulness of look that dwells in their inmost depths, and

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<sup>40</sup> Cvetkovich, Ablow, and other critics, address Walter’s description of Laura as reflecting more Walter’s own desires than any truth about her personhood. Cvetkovich goes on to argue that Laura’s body is valuable only when it becomes “a sign or text” and not an actual body (85).

<sup>41</sup> Further evidence of Walter as a ‘villain’ figure who, like Fosco and Percival, attempts to control and inform the identities of the women in their lives.

shines through all their changes of expression with the light of a purer and a better world. (90)

Even her physical characters are “faint,” “pale,” “soft,” and “limpid” and idealized, relegated to the subject of poetry rather than reality. Her eyes, typically linked to a person’s subjectivity, reflect her purity and exposes her “inmost depths” for all to read and interpret. They are also “tender,” “lovely,” and “beautiful” just like a stereotypical Victorian woman should be. Walter’s portrait here seems to fall in accordance with O’Neill’s argument that Laura trusts in the goodness of life and is “unaware of...complication” (O’Neill 99). Walter depicts Laura as an innocent (and ignorant) child who has not come to understand the real world which again models her after the stereotypical perfect Victorian woman.

Laura is also associated with animals as her pet greyhound Nina is usually with her: “By her side, trotted a little Italian greyhound, the pet companion of all her walks, smartly dressed in a scarlet cloth wrapper, to keep the sharp air from his delicate skin...The dog shivered and trembled, and pressed against her dress impatiently for notice and encouragement” (128). The behaviour of the dog here is also like that of an infant wanting attention from its parent. Nina’s “delicate skin,” “shiver[ing]” and “trembl[ing]” are descriptors that could be attributed just as easily to the feminine, childlike Laura herself. On one hand, Laura’s alignment with her pet greyhound may be offered as proof of critics’ assertions that she is an uninspiring and simple heroine with little strength of will like the helpless Carmina. On the other hand, Nina’s barking and snapping at Sir Percival signalled her understanding of danger and willingness to defend her mistress from that danger and thus suggests that even the feminized, animalistic subject is capable of resistance. In addition, the association of Laura with an animal also links her to Collins’ later heroine in *Heart and Science*, Carmina, who becomes exchanged with the animal body on Benjulia’s laboratory table. Both of these women become the victims of authoritative

men and their victimization is similar in that both are bodies who can easily be interchanged with another—Carmina with a lab animal and Laura with the nervous, simple-minded Anne Catherick who shares status with animals in society.

If Laura endures serious threat to her life and to her identity, Anne arguably suffers more prolonged forms of violence. As Philip Fairlie's illegitimate daughter, Anne is deprived of the nurture and luxuries Laura, her half-sister, receives. Indeed, the only difference between Laura and Anne "could be read as the difference between a rich woman, safely ensconced in domestic comfort, and a poor woman confined to an asylum" (Cvetkovich 92). Anne is menaced and incarcerated by Sir Percival and her mother as well as used by Walter, Marian, and Fosco. Rintoul argues that "Anne's entire life serves as an example of the violent ways in which men write about women; she has been made by Philip and Percival into a hollow, semi-visible, illegitimate, and insane figure of unintelligibility" (102). In this way, Anne becomes the emblem of living beings on whom male authority figures can experiment. Falsely imprisoned in an asylum and exchanged for Laura's dead body, she "haunts" the novel as a "conspicuous reminder" of the abuse and cruelty which goes unspoken or unarticulated in the text (103). Surridge states, "Ill, exhausted, nervous, she represents Laura as Sir Percival's abuse will render—she represents, in other words, Laura as abused wife" (*BH* 153). Anne's body bears witness to cruelty much in the same way the mutilated and vivisected animal body does as she is said to resemble Laura as "after a long illness" (*WinW* 297). Yet, as I will demonstrate, Anne as well as Laura has subversive qualities. Heller and Tromp point to Anne's disruption of class identities in her exchangeability with Laura which suggests that class identity is not inherent but constructed (Heller 124, Tromp 79). As well, as a canvas for men to write on, Anne represents the truth of Percival's and her father Philip's secret transgressions and thus her "blankness

ultimately exposes the weaknesses of male authority” (Rintoul 103). Tromp explains, “[Anne] silently mirrors Sir Percival’s indeterminate social position...she need not know the text of his secret; she embodies it and presents to him the threat of exposure, in the same manner as the bruises on Laura’s arm” (78). As the titular figure of the text, Anne has power in her ability to signify and draw attention to cruelties that cannot be directly represented, just as antivivisectionist women saw animals as embodying their own subordinate conditions. Anne not only exemplifies the connection between women and animals but she also enables readers to see Laura’s own kind of subversion. Anne’s tenacious attempts to protect Laura, such as when she writes her the anonymous letter before her marriage to Sir Percival, demonstrates the truth behind her own experiential and instinctive understanding of Sir Percival’s brutality and links her with Marian as a fierce protector of her sister. Despite critics’ popular assessment of Laura as weak and irresolute, her mental strength, instinctive understanding and desire to be treated as an equal human being rather than a pet demonstrate her silent subversion like that of Anne Catherick.

While a number of critics object to the depiction of Laura as a stereotypically flimsy Victorian woman, at least a few have begun to re-evaluate purportedly negative, feminine traits such as sensitivity, instinct, and quietness.<sup>42</sup> In addition, Laurie Garrison reads the intense sisterly bond between Laura and Marian as the force which enables the elder to resist Fosco’s hypnotic influence. By elevating Laura as the equal of Fosco in their “rivalry for Marian’s affections,” Garrison depicts the sibling relationship not as hierarchical, with Laura dependent on Marian, but rather as one of mutual protection and care: their deep love for one another connotes not a weakness but a strength (77). O’Neill’s comment that Laura has “little need to believe ill of

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<sup>42</sup> Rintoul as well as others such as Ablow and Tromp more briefly recognize Laura as more than the stereotypical Victorian woman. Ryan and Miller also contribute to the re-evaluation of feminine insights and intuition.

anyone or anything” (99) disregards the fact that society as a whole as well as the men around her enable and reinforce her apparent passivity, dependency, and infantilization. As I discussed in regards to *Heart and Science*, Rintoul’s concept of “sensational sympathy” as depicted in the novel is central to this argument. Like Surridge and Tromp, Rintoul takes up spousal abuse in *The Woman in White* but argues that this abuse is due to the men’s own insecurities: “The partial visibility of woman abuse inspires in male characters sensations that compel them to feel—for and like the victims of abuse—a variety of sympathies that temporarily disrupt male authority in terms of marriage, class, gender and even authorship” (95-96). Illustrating her idea of sensational sympathy with the example of Walter’s first meeting with Anne Catherick near London and Fosco’s writing over Marian’s journal, Rintoul goes on to explain that “a mental and physical exchange occurs, whereby authoritative men momentarily know their world through the context of a vulnerable, pained, and silenced subject position, and women assume a kind of ‘manly’ authority to speak and represent the world around them” (98). In her figuration of sympathy, Rintoul imagines men’s inadvertent responses to women’s sensations as disrupting male authority and that moments of abuse for women can also provide the opportunity to seize some type of authority. This argument may not appear to apply to Laura as she could be considered voiceless through the text for she never receives a narrative like Marian and as a result, readers are never granted insight into her thoughts and feelings. Tromp notes not just Laura’s but also Madame Fosco’s silence, stating that “the wives, the most directly and profoundly abused of the characters, remain overtly voiceless, as did the women of England in the parliamentary debates that touched their lives so intimately” (98). Again, women’s status as “voiceless” is comparable to animals’ status in society as both groups actually do possess voices but they are discounted and ignored by patriarchy. Women like Laura were thus in the same position as animals who

could not speak on their own behalf. To be voiceless can lead to further passivity; however, Tromp notes that “in these unspoken narratives lies an inarticulable menace” (99). Drawing on Tromp’s argument, Rintoul moves from Marian’s “textual rape” (when Fosco reads and writes an addendum to her journal) to the silence of certain women, referring to Anne Catherick rather than Madame Fosco: “By not narrating, though, Anne and Laura escape this type of ventriloquism, which, as I have been arguing, is symbolically violent” (111). Anne and Laura evade being controlled by patriarchal language which Marian experiences in her journal, a violent act that involves invasion and penetration. Laura’s source of strength is thus “marked, surprisingly, by silence” and “through the absence of speech, Laura affirms the force of the unseen and unheard, in as effective a manner as Fosco’s rod” (113). Rintoul’s allusion to Fosco’s “private rod”—the concealed instrument of power—suggests that Laura, too, possesses force and that hers derives from concealing her thoughts and feelings (*WinW* 244). Speech is not the only way to communicate, as shown by animals who are considered ‘voiceless’ by humans yet are nevertheless capable of communication. Thus, when Laura appears to be quiet and submissive, these moments may also be moments of power and worth. By framing Laura’s silence as strength, Rintoul’s work offers a new perspective on not only Laura’s character but also on animals as they too can communicate strength and power in different ways than normative masculinity. Collins thus asks his readers to rethink normative methods of demonstrating authority and dominance through Laura’s silent resistance which is so often mistaken for merely submission or weakness.

A clear example of Laura’s surprising strength is in her seemingly unjustified and immediate dislike of Fosco despite his powerful ability to attract women. While Fosco is able to attract and tame obviously outspoken women such as Eleanor Fairlie (who becomes Madame

Fosco) and Marian, Laura would appear as a comparably easy conquest lacking in the strength of mind and rationality to maintain control over her own mind. Like her pet greyhound, however, Laura's instincts and sensations alert her to Fosco's danger and she trusts those feelings. Garrison also points to Laura's dislike of Fosco, calling it "[strange]" and "never overtly explained; [her dislike] is left to remain a manifestation of instinctual mistrust, one that seems to arise from sense rather than intellect" (77). By trusting "sense" instead of "intellect," Laura both remains silent about her dislike yet still manages to arrive at truths about Fosco earlier than the other characters. Right away from her letters, Marian can sense that when Laura is "circumspect and silent" that this "looks ill for the Count. Laura has preserved, far more perfectly than most people do in later life, the child's subtle faculty of knowing a friend by instinct" (*WinW* 226). Firstly, Laura's silence is capable of communication—her sister is able to infer how she feels towards a person without her having to say it—which corresponds with Tromp's suggestion that silence has power. Secondly, the child's "subtle faculty of knowing a friend by instinct" is also an animal's "subtle faculty" as shown by Nina's differing reactions to Sir Percival and Mr. Gilmore, one whom she recognizes as a foe and the other as a friend. Marian's statement here thus further aligns Laura with children and animals but suggests that this shared faculty is not necessarily a weakness. Instead, Laura alerts Marian before Fosco has even come to England of his potential danger. Her faculties also prevent her from falling under Fosco's influence because she trusts in her own instincts and does not ignore them in the face of logic. She tells Marian that he has done "nothing" to justify her dislike and "On the contrary, he was all kindness and attention on our journey, and he several times checked Sir Percival's outbreaks of temper, in the most considerate manner towards *me*" (252 original emphasis). In addition to this behaviour, Fosco always presents her with a nosegay that is "gathered and arranged by himself" after having



found out that Laura is “extravagantly fond of flowers” (244). Evidently, Fosco has practiced his tricks on Laura in an attempt to win her favour. He acts almost like a suitor with his “kindness and attention” and his presentation of flowers; he also prevents Percival’s brutality thereby presenting himself as an ally rather than enemy. Fosco’s solicitousness to Laura, in the light of his villainous character, can also be seen as patronizing or manipulative—attempting to win her favour in order to better control her as he does with his pets (thus also his wife as discussed above). Guided by her instincts, Laura is not ‘tamed’ by his behaviour and continues to be suspicious of him.

Laura’s suspicions of Fosco as well as her reliance, like her pet greyhound, on her instincts becomes increasingly clear when, in a moment of anger, she cries out, “The Count is the vilest creature breathing! The Count is a miserable Spy” (314). While Laura makes this accusation in the heat of the moment and breaks her typical silence, readers only later learn that she is correct, as Fosco is identified as a member of the secret Italian society called The Brotherhood, a group which he has betrayed. Hutter states that, “Where we have no absolute proof...we may only guess that on betraying his oath and commitment to the brotherhood, Fosco became a spy, almost certainly for France” (218). Laura thus predicts Fosco’s big secret—the one that Walter will use to manipulate Fosco into giving his confession and will ultimately lead to Fosco’s death.<sup>43</sup> When Laura makes this pronouncement, she recognizes either consciously or subconsciously that Fosco is both officially a “Spy” as well as unofficially employed in the act of spying.<sup>44</sup> Laura justifies her words by telling Marian that Fosco has been watching her and Anne Catherick when they met in the boathouse, that Fosco was “Sir Percival’s spy—he was Sir

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<sup>43</sup> Hutter’s essay entitled “Fosco Lives!” takes an interesting stance on Collins’ ending by positing just what the title suggests—that Fosco does not die at the end of the novel and instead, Collins hints at a possible alternate ending which would offer “a thoroughgoing repudiation of Victorian pretense” and a “parody” of Victorian morality (198).

<sup>44</sup> Laura’s conclusion here could potentially be another example of Ryan’s “unconscious cerebration.”

Percival's informer—he set Sir Percival watching and waiting, all the morning through, for Anne Catherick and for me” (315). Laura's accusation is thus both instinctual and evidence-based. She has always disliked him without reason, leading her to proclaim he is the “vilest creature breathing” (314) and she deduces from Anne Catherick's description of a “tall stout old man” (316) that it is Fosco who has seen them and therefore informed Sir Percival. Collins demonstrates here that instinctual and logical evidence need not be mutually exclusive as Laura is able to rely on both to support her statement. She articulates two facts about Fosco before anyone else can be certain—firstly, that Fosco is ultimately in control of Sir Percival and thus the more dangerous villain despite his displays of kindness towards the ladies; and secondly, that Fosco is officially employed as a spy. Marian is earlier presented with evidence of Count Fosco's spying which she obtains by acting on her instincts; however, she does not allow herself to trust what her instincts are telling her as Laura does. After writing to the lawyer for advice on whether Laura should sign Sir Percival's document and placing this letter in the post-bag, Marian describes,

Why my next proceeding was to go straight up to the post-bag, and take out my own letter, and look at it again, with a vague distrust on me; and why the looking at it for the second time instantly suggested the idea to my mind of sealing the envelope for its greater security—are mysteries which are either too deep or too shallow for me to fathom. Women, as everybody knows, constantly act on impulses which they cannot explain even to themselves; and I can only suppose that one of those impulses was the hidden cause of my unaccountable conduct on this occasion. (277)

Upon finding that her letter opens far too easily, she attempts to come up with rational alternatives such as, “Perhaps I had fastened it insufficiently? Perhaps there might have been some defect in the adhesive gum? Or, perhaps—No! it is quite revolting enough to feel that third conjecture stirring in my mind. I would rather not see it confronting me in plain black and white” (277). Marian's rational mind labels her “impulses” as “mysterious” and “unaccountable”,

portraying her own compliance to this impulse as an action she was compelled to perform rather than having chosen consciously. These sensations, however, are hardly unaccountable given the hostile situation she is presently involved in. Miller writes that “Nervousness seems the necessary ‘condition’ in the novel for perceiving its real plot and for participating in it as more than a pawn” and this nervousness is “always gendered” as feminine (150-151). Marian’s “vague distrust” is this nervous condition that allows her to “perceive” the “real plot” and arms her with information that will guide her in her future actions. While apparently “unaccountable,” her “impulse” or instinct proves correct and gives her “cause to congratulate [her]self” as she realizes that her correspondence has been read which she would not have discovered without following her ‘womanly’ impulses. Marian falters, however, as she finds herself unable to articulate in her journal her suspicions that Fosco has opened and read her letter to the lawyer and she even blames her own actions by wondering “Perhaps I had fastened it insufficiently?” (*WinW* 277) before entertaining any other ideas. Her claim that she would “rather not see it confronting [her] in plain black and white” not only shows how transgressive and intrusive Fosco’s act of spying is but also Marian’s own reluctance to trust her own instincts. Collins shows how instinct and impulse (which he makes a point of reminding readers is feminized) have been devalued in society and as a result, Marian, who prides herself on her ability to be logical, can hardly trust or articulate the realization that Fosco has read her letter by following these methods of knowledge. In contrast, Laura trusts her instincts, despite the view of these methods as inferior, and is able to articulate quite clearly what she believes: “The Count is a miserable Spy” (314). Thus, Laura’s trust in her womanly impulses actually empowers her by providing her with an understanding that could not necessarily be achieved by logic alone.

Additionally, Laura resists Victorian dismissiveness of intuitive and therefore animalistic methods of knowledge by demanding to be treated with worth and dignity. She demonstrates strength and conviction when she refuses to sign Sir Percival's document requesting she give up her fortune to him. Sir Percival treats Laura like a pet animal as he expects her to accept his instruction to sign the document with no explanation. When Laura asks for an explanation, he claims that she "can't understand it" and that if Mr. Gilmore went through the trouble of explaining his business to her in the past, it was only because "He was [her] servant, and was obliged to explain. I am your husband, and am *not* obliged" (267). His treatment of her is dehumanizing and assumes Laura to be of an inferior intellect, considering her to be incompetent because she relies on alternate methods of knowledge. While he also does not want to disclose the seriousness of his debt, his status as husband and man does not require this disclosure. The parallelism Percival uses when he describes how Gilmore was her "servant" and he her "husband" allows readers to see how easily the word "husband" could be substituted for "master." Therefore, the relationship between a husband and wife is akin to that of a servant and master or analogous to that of pet and master. Just as an owner does not justify his decisions to his pets, neither does Sir Percival feel "obliged" to explain his business for Laura.

Placed in the position of an animal, Laura, however, asks to be treated as a human: "I will sign with pleasure...if you will only treat me as a responsible being. I care little what sacrifice is required of me, if it will affect no one else, and lead to no ill results" (269). She does not protest the signing of the document; what she does protest is her treatment as an inferior animal. She wants only to be treated as a "responsible being." She asserts her worth by explaining that if the business is only explained to her, she is capable of understanding and consenting. Rintoul says of this moment, "The refusal to sign a document that will require her to essentially give up all her

personal wealth in marriage is essentially a refusal to participate in what will be, given her status as a woman and a wife, an unequal and unfair pact” (114). Rintoul’s examination comes from the perspective of intimate violence and wife abuse particularly, but what she points out in seeing Laura’s refusal to sign as a refusal to be treated unequally is relevant to her comparable position in her “status as a woman and a wife” to that of an animal. By refusing to enter this “unequal and unfair pact,” she refuses her own animalization and thus further subjugation. Her worth as a fellow human, “responsible” being is further brought out by her selflessness. She does not care what “sacrifice is required of [her]” so long as no harm is done to anyone else, which shows a consideration for her fellow beings that is not extended by Sir Percival. I would also suggest that this self-effacing stance is another example of Laura’s silent strength—her care for others which exceeds that for herself. Sir Percival even goes so far as to insult her, to which she replies, “After what you have said to me...I refuse my signature until I have read every line in that parchment from the first word to the last. Come away, Marian, we have remained here long enough” (270). Here, Laura outspokenly protests being verbally abused and acts purposely to make a statement that she will not sign unless she is treated with respect and decency. She also directly takes control of the situation, refusing to submit to her husband’s will even though it is her wifely duty according to law. She even directs Marian, instructing her to “Come away” and taking charge in a way that forces Marian, the stronger character, to follow her lead. In her anger, she does not yield even at Fosco’s own entreaty, except for Marian’s intervening plea: “Don’t make an enemy of the Count” (270). Laura is hardly passive, pleasing, or submissive in this encounter and her resistance recuperates the dignity and worth of instinctual, sensitive being so often devalued in society.

The scene in which Laura refuses her signature enables Collins to expose the absolute vulnerability of women (even women of the upper-classes) in relation to men in the Victorian age as well as showcase aspects of Laura's character that do not conform to the stereotypical Angel in the House. In *Bleak Houses*, Surridge identifies a major inconsistency in Collins' plotting in the signing of the document scene that does not receive much attention. She writes,

[Sir Percival's] actions are also pointless because...he has not married a woman with a marriage settlement. As Mr. Gilmore makes clear, Laura's fortune is not held in trust on behalf of her or her children, so Sir Percival does not have to imprison her, stage her death, spirit her off to an insane asylum, or indeed do anything at all to get her money—as soon as they are married, it is *already* in his control. (156; original emphasis)

If Sir Percival does not require Laura to sign the document to give away her fortune then neither does Laura truly have the power to refuse, regardless of whether or not she has read the document for herself. The reasons for this inconsistency are unclear as Surridge states: "Having introduced Frederick Fairlie's laziness to deprive Laura of a settlement, and a solicitor (Mr. Gilmore) to explain to the reader why the lack of a settlement was so important, Collins seems not to have fully grasped the implications of his own plot" (157). By extension, readers seem not to have fully grasped these implications and critics also do not often note the inconsistency (157). Surridge reads this inconsistency as particularly having class implications as she argues that the fact that "readers nevertheless bought into the novel's suspense indicates how unacceptable—in fact, how unimaginable—Victorians found the idea of upper-class women being subject to their husband's full financial control, as were lower-class women" (158). Marital abuse was certainly considered to be a lower class phenomenon in the Victorian era as both Surridge and Tromp point out in their work and thus, Collins' novel exposes this commonly held belief by showing the heiress Laura Fairlie subject to the cruelty of men just as much as the lower-class Anne Catherick. I would argue, however, that Collins' focus here is on how, as

SurrIDGE herself puts it, “[Sir Percival’s] coverture...should render Laura as helpless as a caged mouse” (158). While I do not suggest that Collins made this error intentionally, the inconsistency allows him to not only expose the cruelty of men in their treatment of women as inferior animals in the more dramatic and sensational fashion of falsely imprisoning a woman in a lunatic asylum, but also to show how imprinted into the very laws and beliefs surrounding marriage was the positioning of women with animals like the “caged mouse.” When attentive readers recognize this inconsistency, they recognize that Laura is not helpless or weak in the novel as she actually exercises more power than she really would have in Victorian society by refusing (and even being asked for) her signature. Stripping a woman of her personhood and of her status as a “responsible being” does not take a false incarceration but rather only a legal relationship with a man. Collins’ inconsistency thus furthers his work to expose the comparable positioning of women and animals in society. Women are indeed “as helpless as a caged mouse” in terms of their relationships with men, yet Collins also makes a point of showing their resistance to this treatment by having Laura refuse (SurrIDGE 158). While Laura’s refusal functions to set the false incarceration plot in motion, it also allows Collins to present women’s particular resistance to being animalized and assertion of their own worth as human beings—a resistance that would not actually be possible in society and is not shown in *Heart and Science*. Thus, the resistance of Laura to her equation with animals in this scene attempts to assert women’s worth even if they are seen to share certain qualities with animals such as instinct and emotion and foreshadows the issues that will come to the forefront in the antivivisection movement.

The portrayal of Laura as infantile and unproductive continues, however, throughout the novel and is even perpetuated by other, morally righteous characters such as Walter who

consistently place her in an animal-like position which she does not want nor warrant.<sup>45</sup> After being rescued from her traumatic months in the lunatic asylum, Laura is significantly altered; however, this change is not because she is a weak woman: “Faculties less delicately balanced, constitutions less tenderly organized, must have suffered under such an ordeal as this. No man could have gone through it, and come out of it unchanged” (*WinW* 435-436). Written from the perspective of Walter, Laura is, of course, of “delicate” faculties and a “tender” constitution, but she does endure suffering that “no man” could have undergone “unchanged,” meaning her alteration is not necessarily a feminized condition. Laura’s lessened character is not a result of her inherent weakness but only a natural result of extreme trauma. When readers view Laura as a survivor of trauma and not just a weak, further infantilized female, her silent strength and resiliency of character is redeemed as she is seen as a person who has survived great suffering and emerged from it alive. Despite this trauma, Laura again attempts to assert her worth and value as a human being and resists being treated as a pet animal in her new domestic setting with Marian and Walter. She tells her companions, “I am so useless—I am such a burden on both of you... You work and get money, Walter; and Marian helps you. Why is there nothing I can do? You will end in liking Marian better than you like me—you will, because I am so helpless! Oh, don’t, don’t, don’t treat me like a child” (480). Many critics when analyzing this scene agree that Laura’s protest is “another example of the infantilization of women in the nineteenth century” (Bachman and Cox footnote 480). Miller claims that “Walter immediately takes the plea for more evidence of her childishness” in his attempt to regain his masculinity by enforcing a parent-

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<sup>45</sup> Laura is often compared explicitly to a child rather than an animal in the text, however, as readers can see in *Heart and Science* through the character Zo, children and animals are also associated as both are relegated to positions of inferiority and in need of protection by authoritative adult men. Monica Flegel’s critical work particularly examines Fosco’s pets as his pseudo children and if one were to reverse this equation, children become like pseudo pets. To treat a grown woman as a child is thus also like treating her as a domestic pet. Therefore, when I use evidence of Laura being treated as an infant, for my purposes, it will also be used as evidence of her being treated as a domestic pet.



child relationship with her (175). In *Woman and the Demon*, Auerbach states that Laura's "pathetically inept attempts to fend for herself and earn some money align her with such fictional parodies of the Victorian child-wife" (138). Tromp differs slightly from the others as she argues Laura's desire to be useful "indicates her ingestion of the value system that Walter represents" (89) and thus signals her conformity to her new soon-to-be husband's middle-class identity. Laura's attempt to contribute here is rarely taken seriously; however, I would suggest it shows an attempt to break out of her role which Heller describes as a "house pet and child relegated to domestic space" (138). Her analysis is also concerned with gender roles, particularly in terms of the spousal power relations: "When Hartright prevents Laura from selling her pictures, the clearest figuration of a rivalry between a male and a female artist in the novel, he asserts his manliness by ensuring that a woman is dependent on him" (138). By suggesting that Walter and Laura could potentially become rivals over the sale of their art, Heller configures Laura's plea to contribute as one that would elevate her to the equal of Walter which is important because that would mean she would break out of her status as kept "house pet" to exercise her own individual agency. Laura, however, does not want to rival Walter but merely be treated as a responsible human being, just as she demanded of Sir Percival earlier. She calls herself "useless," "helpless," and a "burden" on those around her, recognizing that she is in a position of inferiority and reliance like an animal who relies on their master to feed, house, and take care of them. She is not only aware of this position but protests against it in an emotional plea of "don't, don't, don't treat me like a child" (*WinW* 480). Her emotional protest allows for nineteenth-century readers and for Walter to negate her authority and instead attribute her outburst to female sensibilities. By preventing her from meaningfully contributing to the household and only pretending to sell her paintings, Walter further reaffirms her status as pet animal. The villain Sir Percival and the

hero Walter are joined in their mimetic treatment of women as both attempt to keep Laura in the position of a household pet rather than an equal in order to assert their own superiority.

Cvetkovich and Ablow attribute Walter's treatment of Laura to legitimizing his class ascension as her husband which once again positions her as an object to be used for men's personal gain (Cvetkovich 72, Ablow 96).<sup>46</sup> Instead of depicting Laura as actually weak, passive, and submissive, her treatment by the men reveals how patriarchal society continually relegates women to being weak, passive, and submissive even when they do not want to be treated this way or even protest against this treatment.

When one compares the marriage between Sir Percival and Laura with that of Walter and Laura, the claim that the former clearly contains cruelty and conflict typically believed to be "obviously unimaginable in Laura's relationship with Walter" is contradicted by Walter's own form of control and subjugation (Ablow 104). As Heller argues, "In [Walter's] role as a male voice of authority, he has as much at stake in controlling the novel's female voices as Glyde and Fosco, the more obviously chauvinistic figures, have in taming the novel's women" (115). Even in his narration then, he is similarly "taming" the women. In fact, Rintoul links Walter's pen—his ability to control the narrative—with Sir Percival's walking-stick, which the baronet uses to thrash violently at inanimate things when he feels thwarted. Rintoul elaborates: "Writing, speaking, drawing, and beating are often connected in the novel; a number of sticks, rods, and other phallic objects are used violently by men to make marks that correspond with violent representational authority and actual physical cruelty" (102). Walter is not physically abusive and does protect and take care of Laura; however, he is like Sir Percival in that he takes away

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<sup>46</sup> Significantly, Marian colludes with Walter to keep Laura in ignorance of the fact her paintings are going unsold. She thus reproduces patriarchal order herself, contributing to Laura's infantilization and proving Walter's effectiveness as Laura's husband and master who has the "power to attribute meaning to her" (Ablow 96). Marian is certainly culpable as Laura's subordinate status allows her to perform the role of middle-class wife who is responsible for the housekeeping duties and thereby ensure she is necessary to the household.

Laura's selfhood and humanity by persisting in placing her in a comparable position to that of an animal. Collins harnesses Laura's feminine character to reveal how stereotypical feminine characteristics such as passivity are forced onto women by patriarchal society which views their sex as the equivalent of animals rather than responsible beings. As well, he also shows the beginning of women's resistance to this unfair treatment. While Laura is often contrasted with her more masculine, logical, and obviously subversive sister Marian, this contrast does not mean Laura is simply a victim who does not offer any resistance to being animalized. Her silent strength (as Rintoul argues) and her request to be considered an equal human being instead of domestic pet demonstrates that resistance can come through other, more traditionally feminine methods than an outright agitation like the vivisection movement.

Moreover, the more obviously powerful and resisting female character in the novel is Laura's apparently opposite sister, Marian Halcombe, who represents a combination of typically masculine and feminine qualities which she harnesses to resist her own animalization and protect her sister from cruel treatment.<sup>47</sup> Marian's protection of Laura is similar to the later female protesters active in the antivivisection campaign who felt their duty was to speak up for defenceless animals as Auerbach suggests (137).<sup>48</sup> One of Collins' most famous characters, Marian is typically celebrated for her 'gender-bending' abilities, encapsulated by the image of "Marian's Moustache" which Richard Collins frames his essay around (132). Critics usually refer to Walter's first introduction of Marian as evidence of her confusing gender communicated

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<sup>47</sup> As noted before, Marian too infantilizes Laura and at times, reproduces patriarchal control and authority over her sister. She and Walter are complicitous in keeping Laura from the knowledge of her half-sister Anne, her father's affair, and the truth of Sir Percival's secret. Arguably, Marian perpetuates the patriarchal strategy of preserving the 'innocence' of young women by keeping them in ignorance. One could argue that patriarchy is so prevalent in society the only way for Marian to resist its authority is to occasionally participate in its strategies. Her desire to keep Laura in ignorance could also show how devalued Laura's being is in society as even her sister does not think her strong or capable enough to share information or make important decisions.

<sup>48</sup> Auerbach even makes a direct comparison between spinster Marian and antivivisectionist Frances Power Cobbe.

by her feminine body yet unappealing face and his mixed response to her appearance of both attraction and repulsion.<sup>49</sup> While I do not mean to rehearse this extensive criticism, Marian's initial description is significant for my purposes because her features suggest she is an intelligent, capable being rather than a stereotypically feminine animal who is treated as pliable and helpless. Richard Collins' point that "Walter tries to account for his complex reaction (erotic desire, aesthetic horror) by anatomizing or dissecting Marian's freakish appearance in terms of her contradictory sexual characteristics, notably her woman's body and her man's face" (135) is particularly relevant as Walter's "anatomizing" and "dissecting" gaze can be metaphorically linked to vivisection which dissects and cuts into the female or animal body in order to know or understand what is inside in the same way Walter attempts to 'know' Marian by judging her body and her face. Marian, however, confounds the male vivisector's gaze by her "freakish" appearance and she reverses it by looking back at him: "She had...piercing, resolute brown eyes...Her expression—bright, frank, and intelligent—appeared, while she was silent, to be altogether wanting in those feminine attractions of gentleness and pliability" (*WinW* 74). Marian's eyes "pierce" Walter just as he dissects her with his glance and they are "resolute" rather than "gentle," meaning she will not be kept under control of his gaze. The adjectives "bright, frank, and intelligent" associate her with "perception" and "agency," which is coded as masculine (Cameron 6), but also, grant her power and authority not stereotypically ascribed to women at this time. Marian's "want" of "gentleness" and "pliability" pose a threat to the masculine authority of Walter and by extension, the other male authority figures in the text who would prefer her to submit and obey such as Sir Percival. Thus, from her initial description,

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<sup>49</sup> See Richard Collins for a discussion of the "erotic charge" of Walter's description of Marian (134-135). Nina Auerbach and D.A. Miller also offer similarly gendered analyses of Marian's outward appearance.

readers are alerted that Marian is a responsible, capable being and her “piercing, resolute” character will resist and confound the authoritative men in the novel.

Despite her strong characteristics and personal agency, Marian is vulnerable in her position as spinster sister who lives in the marital home of Blackwater Park with Laura under the permission of Sir Percival. Marian acts as a companion to Laura in an even more substantial role than Nina, the greyhound, accompanied Laura at Limmeridge House. As such, she understands that she has little power in the household and must not appear to pose a threat to Sir Percival, the master of the house. Before their move, Marian warns Laura that “no man tolerates a rival—not even a woman-rival—in his wife’s affections” and that Marian’s “chance of living with [Laura] permanently under her own roof, depended entirely on [her] not arousing Sir Percival’s jealousy and distrust by standing between them at the beginning of the their marriage” (*WinW* 212). She goes on to write in her journal, “I am to ask a personal favour, for the first time in my life, and to ask it of the man of all others to whom I least desire to owe a serious obligation of any kind” (212). Here, Marian’s position is one in which she must cater and appeal to a man and not appear to “rival” him in any way in order to remain with her sister. The deference Marian must show to Sir Percival makes her vulnerable like a pet who must please its master in order to remain under his care; however, Marian’s knowledge and understanding of this position allows her to control her actions to get what she wants—a spot by Laura’s side. Marian thus willingly subjugates herself “for the first time in [her] life” and agrees to take on a lesser status in the house. She even says that “I think I could do even more than that, for Laura’s sake” (212), demonstrating that it is her love for her sister that allows her to endure this treatment. By willingly entering the house as an unthreatening domestic animal, Marian takes on the

experience of what Laura protests against—the equalizing treatment of women with animals.<sup>50</sup> She does takes on this experience with power and dignity, however, and this makes her admirable for not only readers but the male characters in the novel, particularly Fosco. In the document signing scene, Marian speaks up on behalf of Laura, violating her promise of not rivalling Sir Percival and not evoking his “distrust,” and he responds with ire: “The next time you invite yourself to a man’s house, Miss Halcombe, I recommend you not to repay his hospitality by taking his wife’s side against him in a matter that doesn’t concern you” (268). Sir Percival clearly voices his expectation that Marian submit and respect him regardless of his behaviour or intentions because of the “hospitality” he provides her. In his mind, she is subject to his instructions and his bullying even more so than Laura as they have no actual legal relationship which forces him to support her; rather, she depends on his good will. Marian is thus in a comparable position to the spaniel whom Sir Percival beats when he has misbehaved (242). His comment provokes a violent reaction in Marian who struggles to control herself from “knock[ing] him down” and leaving the house (268). She controls herself only because of her devotion once again to Laura and instead of reacting physically, she uses her logic and decides to write to the lawyer for advice once the confrontation is broken up by Fosco (273). Marian’s plan is motivated by her realization that Sir Percival has “openly shown himself in the library” and she must now take action to protect her sister from a brutish and cruel husband (274). By doing so, Marian exhibits her versatility—she accepts her status as lesser animal as long as it serves her purposes but when this position becomes no longer useful for her and her sister’s protection, she becomes the intelligent, rational detective. Fosco, the more intelligent of the two men, recognizes this ability and tells his friend: “Where are your eyes? Can you look at Miss Halcombe, and not

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<sup>50</sup> At the beginning, Walter compares his position as drawing master to that of a “harmless domestic animal” admitted into the society of young women (103). This comparison feminizes Walter but also exhibits that Marian’s position, like Walter’s, is precarious like that of an employee and depends on her harmlessness and obedience.

see that she has the foresight and the resolution of a man? With that woman for my enemy, I, with all my brains and experience—I, Fosco, cunning as the devil himself...I walk, in your English phrase, upon egg-shells” (340). While Marian’s eyes were piercing and resolute, Sir Percival’s eyes seem to be incompetent or inept as he cannot see that she is more than a harmless domestic pet to be kept and abused; she is the equal of man. Fosco goes on to even establish her as equal to himself who he bombastically claims is “cunning as the devil himself” with lots of “brains and experience.” Just as Marian threatens Walter’s masculine authority, Fosco also recognizes “in Marian a new feminine character who rivals his claims to masculine authority” (Cameron 23). Marian’s ability to gather information, devise plans, and spy on the men offers her up as a capable detective and thus Fosco’s enemy. When Sir Percival’s lawyer arrives at Blackwater Park, Marian immediately deduces, “But when a lawyer travels from London to Hampshire, without being sent for, and when his arrival at a gentleman’s house seriously startles the gentleman himself, it may be safely taken for granted that the legal visitor is the bearer of some very important and very unexpected news” (*WinW* 247). This realization is then matched by Fosco who confirms that “something *has* happened” which “quietly answer[ed] the unexpressed idea at that moment in [Marian’s] mind” (247 original emphasis). In this moment, Marian and Fosco seem to resemble one another in their ability to draw conclusions from information at their disposal. As their interests are opposed, their ability to match each other situates them as rivals despite Marian’s inferior social status as a woman. Thus, Marian cannot be treated or handled as easily disposable and controlled like women such as Carmina were thought to be because of her “new feminine character” which asserts her own worth and authority in front of the typically dominant men.

As Cameron argues, Marian's 'feminine instincts' combined with her 'masculine' reason enable her to be an effective detective and protector of her sister. Cameron correlates her detection to her independence, stating: "Collins's capable heroine suggests that women's independence depends not so much on her ability to act and think like men but rather on those qualities deemed feminine. Her feminine affect and, more importantly, her sentimental love for her sister both motivate and sustain her careful detection and interpretation of the events and threats that surround her" (4). To illustrate the point made here about the value of Marian's "qualities deemed feminine," Cameron draws on the example of Marian's discovery that her letter has been tampered with by Fosco mentioned earlier which she argues shows how "thought is still inextricably tied to sensation and the body" (15). Marian's ability to "channel sensation into interpretation" (15) makes her not only a competent detective but threatens common conceptions of sensations and emotional impulses as inferior forms of knowledge by using them for valid interpretations. Marian is effectively able to absorb stimulation and act; however, this ability does not prevent Fosco from being able to emotionally manipulate or vivisect her. His 'vivisection' takes place through the magnetic influence he exerts one night in the character of the "Man of Sentiment" (*WinW* 305). Marian describes how Fosco's eyes "seemed to reach my inmost soul" and "his voice trembled along every nerve in my body, and turned me hot and cold alternately" (307). Marian's body is invaded, her nerves manipulated, and her temperature altered just as the animal subject is manipulated under the vivisector's knife. In this case, Fosco's sentiment rather than the scientist's indifference is what enables him to penetrate Marian's body. Marian *is* vivisected by Fosco but she is not merely a victim; rather, she is able to respond in her own invasion of the men's conversation which she accomplishes through her own strength and her love for Laura.



Marian derives strength from her attachment to Laura and this relationship fuels her most subversive action. Not content to passively endure subordination, she is willing to engage actively in protecting Laura's safety as shown by her angry response to Sir Percival. She decides to eavesdrop on Fosco and Sir Percival's conversation outside the library and goes to great lengths to prevent herself from being seen as well as faithfully recording the words of the two men. She claims "one motive to sanction the act to my own conscience and to give me courage enough for performing it" and that is of course "Laura's honour, Laura's happiness—Laura's life itself" (334-335). This feat of detection, just as her moments of protection, is inspired by Laura and the feelings she has for her. In preparation for her spying, Marian must change her outfit to accommodate small spaces and easy movements. She removes her silk gown, the "white and cumbersome parts of [her] underclothing" in which she regularly "took up the room of three men at least" (336). Now changed, "no man could have passed through the narrowest spaces more easily than [her]" (336). Ann Gaylin and Rintoul read this scene as subversive because Mariah literally removes the signifiers of femininity which suggests that it is femininity itself that impedes her abilities as a detective (Gaylin 315-316, Rintoul 108). In her new costume, however, "no man" could move more easily than her, meaning Marian has not simply exchanged the feminine for the masculine but rather forged some combination of both—like her woman's body and man's face. Her costume change prepares as well as establishes her as a capable detective who is able to perform both logical deductions and instinctual insights.

When Marian hides herself between the flower pots and the railing on the verandah overlooking the library (335), she completely outwits the men, even Fosco, and solidifies her worth and capabilities. In his postscript in her journal, Fosco praises "the excellence of the stratagem by which this unparalleled woman surprised the private interview...[and] the

marvellous accuracy of her report of the whole conversation from its beginning to end” (352). Despite being outwitted, Fosco cannot help but give credit to Marian’s threatening talents and abilities. Eavesdropping “dramatizes the struggle for the control of a story and its dissemination” and thus Marian’s plan to overhear the conversation is not just intelligent detection but subversive in that she seizes control of information (Gaylin 305). Calling her eavesdropping a “daredevil move,” Cameron says Marian “symbolically breaks free of the confines of the home (and the gender conventions of the domestic sphere)” (22). By physically moving from inside the house to the outside, she refuses to be limited by typical gender roles, literally and symbolically breaking free from the ‘bars’ of her ‘cage.’ Her “daredevil move” can be compared to women who broke free of the confining domestic sphere and spoke out against vivisection in a public and social discourse. While Marian’s main action is listening rather than speaking, she positions herself, through her excellent “stratagem,” as a participant in the men’s conversation and holder of information like the women of the antivivisection campaign instead of passive victim.

Marian falls ill after her eavesdropping and is left incapacitated in her bed which Gaylin posits is her “punishment” for “transgress[ing] conventional boundaries of law, narrative, and gender” (306). Her illness leaves her vulnerable to vivisection or the manipulation of doctors, specifically Fosco, and places her in a similar position as Carmina except without an Ovid Vere to restore her to health. Fosco does take advantage of Marian’s incapacitation by using the opportunity to read through her journal and attach an endnote which critics identify as essentially a “textual rape” (Miller 184; Rintoul 107). Rintoul sees this textual rape in addition to her illness as further punishment for her subversive behaviour. She states about the illness, “Collins here imagines the female body as weak and susceptible by representing the cause-and-effect relationship between Marian’s behaviour and her illness” (108). Her illness suggests that her

body is unable to equal the daringness of her behaviour and instead, restricts her from further action. Fosco's postscript is also restricting as he "attempts to imbue Marian with the same blankness of meaning that is forced on her sister and Anne Catherick" (107) because "Marian poses the threat of a sympathetic relation between masterful narrating men and victimized women; she can make men feel and act like voiceless, vulnerable women" (109). The textual rape, as well as representing Fosco's ability to wield power over the women, can thus be seen as an attempt to excise his own vulnerability in the face of Marian's superior and admirable skills of detection. His admiration for her, however, *does* limit his power over not only her but also her sister Laura who she tries so hard to protect. Here, Collins offers a complex and nuanced version of sympathy—one that is invasive and violent yet compels emotion in a way that compromises even Fosco's avidity for power. Fosco's praise and admiration which he offers in his postscript is precisely the kind of behaviour that causes Marian to feel violated. The feeling of sympathy is thus not only strong and powerful but it also compromises those involved in the exchange in a way that cannot be influenced by reason.

Fosco writes in his postscript that his admiration has "induced me to offer to the unimpressible doctor who attends on her, my vast knowledge of chemistry, and my luminous experience of the more subtle resources which medical and magnetic science have placed at the disposal of mankind" (*WinW* 352). Instead of vivisecting or experimenting on Marian's vulnerable body, Fosco offers his services—both medical and otherwise—to her care and recuperation. He positions himself as Ovid—the saviour figure rather than the manipulative, indifferent Benjulia. Fosco recognizes that Marian's fever has turned into typhus and even argues with the certified medical man Dr. Dawson about his method of treatment. When barred from the room, Fosco says, "I entered this room, sir, in the sacred interests of humanity... If that unhappy

lady dies, I will give my testimony in a court of justice that your ignorance and obstinacy have been the cause of her death” (382). Where Benjulia dismissed the idea of his experiment being for the sake of humanity, Fosco announces his services are offered for “sacred” humanity which suggests that he respects Marian’s life, even speaking of it as divine (albeit somewhat exaggeratedly). His demand that the doctor treat Marian correctly or he will face legal consequences is reminiscent of Ovid’s threat to Benjulia that “If I fail...her death lies at your door...your life shall answer for hers” (*HS* 307). In both cases, women are subject to the discretion and judgement of male doctors. While Benjulia’s judgement is based in cruelty and Dawson’s presumably from ignorance, both possess the power to determine the women’s fate. For Carmina, this means she almost loses her life at the hands of the vivisector whereas Marian is actually looked after by her metaphorical ‘vivisector’ Fosco and he himself even credits this care to his admiration for her superior qualities.<sup>51</sup> His behaviour towards Marian demonstrates the extent to which she has resisted the animalistic treatment experienced by Carmina and asserted her own authority.

Significantly, though Walter eventually replaces Marian as Laura’s protector and Fosco’s rival, she recovers from her illness and foils the plans of Fosco and Percival by rescuing her sister from the insane asylum, where Laura has been committed as Anne Catherick. She discovers it is her sister and not Anne Catherick that is imprisoned in the asylum and she effectively procures her escape through a logical plan. She bribes the nurse in charge which is another example of not only Marian’s ability to exercise reason but also women working together to help other women (430). In addition, Marian initiates the detective work that Walter

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<sup>51</sup> Despite his insistence on genuine care for Marian, Fosco’s earlier reference to “magnetic science” (*WinW* 352) does suggest the use of mesmerism and thus another form of control. While not the physical cruelty of vivisection, Fosco may be hoping to employ the treatment of mesmerism to manipulate Marian while she is ill.

continues such as having Fosco's house watched and investigating the Rubelle's, Fosco's accomplices (426). She also provides for Laura financially, cashing out of her stocks (430) and removing Laura to London where they would be difficult to trace (437). All of these actions take place while Walter is out of the country and show Marian to be a capable detective and protector. Significantly, Marian's influence over Laura's safety extends to the actions of the villain himself. While Fosco cunningly and ruthlessly schemes to strip Laura of her identity and take her life that way, he refrains from actually killing her:

I have to assert, with the whole force of my conviction, that the one weak place in my scheme, would never have been found out, if the one weak place in my heart had not been discovered first. Nothing but my fatal admiration for Marian restrained me from stepping in to my own rescue, when she effected her sister's escape...In brief, Fosco, at this serious crisis, was untrue to himself. Deplorable and uncharacteristic fault! Behold the cause, in my Heart—behold, in the image of Marian Halcombe, the first and last weakness of Fosco's life. (603)

Fosco confesses that his cunning scheme was “weak[ened]” only by his “fatal admiration” and respect for Marian. His confession here is truly one of “Heart” and “science” in which his heart or his emotions for Marian rule his head, the scientific, calculating and ruthless side of his nature and prevent him from harming Laura. Fosco is often dramatic in his expression but the substance of what he says remains true: he has risked his “own rescue” because of Marian. In *Heart and Science*, the love Ovid has for Carmina heals her (Straley 367) and in *The Woman in White*, the emotions Fosco has for Marian protects her and her sister but in a very different fashion in that Fosco acts “uncharacteristic[ally]” against his cruel nature. Both texts, however, bring out that emotional attachments trump cruelty and that a lack of sympathy or feeling resulting in indifference is what allows men like Benjulia and Sir Percival to enact their violent and cruel agendas on women. Collins is therefore warning his readers of the danger of neglecting or devaluing emotions and becoming entirely ‘scientific,’ meaning rational, calculating, and

indifferent. Fosco admires Marian but so too do readers who continue to invest themselves in her character and root for her to succeed even when Walter takes over narrative control of the story. Readers are thus aligned with Fosco: regardless of their feelings for Laura, they likely would want to see Laura safe for the sake of Marian. Marian's love and the sisterly kinship between them is a source of strength and power as it has the power to make the men weak and therefore place them in feminized positions.

In this way, Marian becomes like a woman protesting against the use of vivisection and advocating for the fair and equal treatment of inferior groups such as women and animals. Surridge also recognizes Marian as an outspoken women, calling her "a fiercely passionate advocate of the abused woman" (*BH* 158). Drawing on other contemporary fiction to Collins, she explains that women like Marian who protected victims were considered "dangerous" because they "threatened patriarchal marriage, under which the husband was constructed as the protector of the wife...But when a woman took on this role, she became a potentially feminist advocate. Marian Halcombe, I contend, steps into this ideologically volatile position" (159). Sir Percival threatens Laura rather than protecting her which Collins shows to point out how the ideals of patriarchal marriage have become corrupted and Walter does act in the interests of protecting Laura yet it is ultimately Marian who is most effectively able to hold off Fosco on her own and provide this protection. Where Walter is able to elicit a confession from Fosco only through the threat of a third party, Professor Pesca, another member of the Brotherhood, whose safety and identity Walter jeopardizes in his hunt for Fosco, Marian stumps Fosco through her own force of personality. Marian and Fosco thus perfectly 'match' each other, personality for personality. As Surridge points out, Marian's statements on gender and relations between the sexes "clearly [draw] on feminist discourse" and how the novel itself "coincides with the onset of first-wave

feminism” (160). Marian as a figure of the feminism movement demonstrates that Collins is constantly conscious of the cultural moment in which he is writing and is constructing his characters to reflect the current issues being discussed just as he does twenty years later with *Heart and Science*. Surridge’s argument that Marian is specifically a feminist advocate for abused women is undisputed in this paper, however, I would add to this argument that Marian’s feminist advocacy mirrors the agitation of women on behalf of animals in the antivivisection movement. With women being treated as animals and possessing the same status as them in both the household and society at large, Marian’s assertion of her own worth and authority subtly protests against this treatment of herself and women as animals.

Marian’s presence in the novel is clearly significant and Walter, the final narrator, leaves readers with her: “The pen falters in my hand...let Marian end our story” (*WinW* 617). There is much divide between critics as to whether, through these lines, Marian retains authority in the narrative or whether she is effectively written out or written over by Walter who frames and thereby limits her voice. On one hand, Gaylin points out how Walter “ultimately controls what is told to whom” (305), meaning he retains masculine authority over the narrative. Therefore, Walter’s “strategy for containing Marian’s narrative energy” can be connected to Fosco’s textual rape or “colonization” of her diary (Heller 134). On the other hand, Water’s pen which “falters” suggests his loss of manhood (140-141). Cameron states, “No doubt Walter’s pen ‘falters’ because he realizes that Marian once again exceeds his control, his ability to write and therein contain her” (27). Just before this, Marian has informed Walter of his son’s new identity as “Heir of Limmeridge” (617), demonstrating once again her superior knowledge and ultimate control of the narrative. Ultimately, Marian ends the story because it is she who has resonated with readers

and thus become arguably the most important figure in the text. Collins describes Victorian readers' love for Marian in a Preface to the French edition:

Miss Halcombe, in particular, garnered so much favour that I was obliged more than once to declare whether or not the character was being described as she really existed; occasionally, people wanted to know if the person upon whom I had based my character would entertain the entreaties of different bachelors who, thoroughly convinced that she would make an excellent wife, intended to ask for her hand in marriage. (623)

The public's reaction exemplified that Marian was not contained by Walter's narrative or even by the limits of fiction.<sup>52</sup> The end of *The Woman in White* thus refutes an ending that safely re-establishes male authority. Despite critical division, I would suggest Collins uses Marian's character to move beyond simply revealing the cruelty of men towards those whom they consider inferior but to make the subversive suggestion that women cannot or might not be able to be contained by men and will instead resist patriarchal domination and begin to assert themselves as the equals of men not inferior animals.

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<sup>52</sup> Collins also notes in his Preface to the 1861 edition that a lot of the characters "have made friends for me wherever they have made themselves known" (621); however, Marian was the object of particular and special interest.



Afterword: Collins' Effect on the Connection between Women and Animals:

Collins' *The Woman in White* reveals how women and non-human animals occupied comparable cultural positions in Victorian society and particularly in their relationships to men. As explicitly shown by *Heart and Science*'s publication twenty years later, Collins was clearly concerned with animal welfare as well as the position of women in society. He also saw how these two issues were often inextricably linked and interconnected as did the antivivisectionist campaigners. Through the subtle incorporation of women's and animal's issues in his novel, Collins exposes the way society at large devalues certain traits or methods of knowledge as well as how society treats those deemed inferior beings, exemplified by the characters of Laura and Anne. His two villains, Sir Percival Glyde and Count Fosco, represent the different forms that this treatment can take—both physical violence and the more pervasive emotional and mental cruelty and manipulation of Fosco. The villains' views of the women in the novel as equivalent to and interchangeable for non-human animals mirrors the concerns of antivivisectionists and the actions of Dr. Benjulia of *Heart and Science*. Collins implies, however, in his portrayal of Laura's silent strength and Marian's protestation and assertion of her worth, that this comparable positioning and treatment is not only unwarranted but no longer acceptable. In an increasingly scientific, modern, evolving, and complex society, the status quo of patriarchy and male domination cannot remain simply unchanged. Just as Marian Halcombe navigates the world around her with a combination of animal instinct and scientific reason, feminine emotion and masculine logic, men and women must come to navigate the changing times in a way that promotes more equal and liberal views and behaviours. While Collins may not have intended to extend this liberty to non-human animals, by showing animal instincts as legitimate forms of knowledge that actually provide insight where reason or logic cannot or fail to do so, he also

redeems and gives authority to the sensations and being of non-human animals. The position of animals, for Collins, seems to be absolutely indicative of the conceptualizations of superiority and inferiority in society and how those in dominant positions treat those under their power.

In both novels, Collins responds to and reflects on the cultural moment in which he is writing—a moment where the cruel and domineering treatment of women and non-human animals by men was being acknowledged and resisted as the connection between two groups became more prominent in almost every aspect of life. The objectification of women and animals was not just occurring at the level of science and medicine shown by the antivivisection movement but rather, as Collins demonstrates in his novels, the connection existed at the level of common cultural discourse and practices. The vivisectioning scientist and the indifferent doctor were very real concerns for women and female characters in society and fiction while also functioning as a threatening metaphor for women's vulnerability to men's control. As shown in this thesis, extensive research has been done on the antivivisection movement as well as the relationship between women and animals in the nineteenth century and I have hoped to illuminate the role science and its emphasis on logic have played in perpetuating the supremacy of patriarchy and masculine forms of knowledge. By pairing this context with Collins' texts, one can see the threat this type of thinking poses to women's lives. Villains like Benjulia and Fosco are men placed in positions of authority—doctors, husbands—yet treat their fellow women as if they are disposable. The comparable position of women and animals presents an even more insidious threat than just vivisection as it extends men's power to almost every aspect of life. When Frances Power Cobbe voiced her concern in "Wife-Torture in England" that men no longer could be trusted as responsible or caring 'masters' of women and animals, she recognizes that a change needed to occur in society lest women end up like Carmina Graywell, Anne

Catherick or Laura Fairlie, completely exposed to the abuses of men. The endings of *Heart and Science* and *The Woman in White* suggest harmonious marital unions where benevolence and mutual affection appear to render the patriarchal structure of marriage acceptable; however, the spectre of Marian Halcombe with whom Collins ends his most famous novel remains with readers as the image of the protesting woman who has given everything to her cause and succeeded.

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