

## VIVISECTION AND LATE-VICTORIAN LITERARY CULTURE

The nineteenth-century antivivisection movement was supported by a striking number of poets, authors, and playwrights who attended meetings, signed petitions, contributed funds, and lent their pens to the cause. Yet live animal experimentation also permeated the Victorian imagination and shaped British literary culture in ways that the movement against it did not anticipate and could not entirely control. This is the first sustained literary-critical study of the topic. It traces responses to the practice through an extensive corpus of canonical, popular, and ephemeral texts including newspapers, scientific books, and government documents. Asha Hornsby sheds light on the complex entanglement of art and science at the fin de siècle, and explores how the representational and aesthetic pre-occupations opened up by vivisection debates often sat uneasily alongside a socio-political commitment to animal protection. Despite efforts to present writing and vivisectioning as rivalrous activities, author and experimenter, pen and scalpel, often resembled each other.

ASHA HORNSBY researches the interplay between scientific medicine, public health anxieties, and Victorian culture. Following her Arts and Humanities Research Council-funded PhD at University College of London, she taught at the Universities of Nottingham and St Andrews. She is pursuing a literary-critical study of nineteenth-century global seafaring and disease supported by a British Academy Postdoctoral Fellowship (2024–6).

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# VIVISECTION AND LATE-VICTORIAN LITERARY CULTURE

ASHA HORNSBY

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Cambridge University Press & Assessment  
978-1-009-50352-5 — Vivisection and Late-Victorian Literary Culture  
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Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781009503525](http://www.cambridge.org/9781009503525)

DOI: 10.1017/9781009503532

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When citing this work, please include a reference to the DOI 10.1017/9781009503532

First published 2025

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*A Cataloging-in-Publication data record for this book is available from the Library of Congress*

ISBN 978-1-009-50352-5 Hardback

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*For my parents,  
Peter and Bridget*

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## *Acknowledgements*

This book germinated during my doctoral studies at the English department of University College London (UCL). First and foremost, I would like to thank Juliette Atkinson whose generous mentorship, humour, and eye for detail have made this project a pleasure. I am also indebted to Peter Swaab and Eric Langley for cross-period perspectives and to Alistair Robinson and Eva-Charlotte Mebius whose thoughtful recommendations have enriched several chapters.

Beyond UCL, I have benefitted from the support of colleagues at the Universities of Nottingham, Durham, and St Andrews, including Adam Rounce, Steven Morrison, Simon James, Katie Garner, and Ian Johnson. I am particularly grateful for my PhD examiners, Angelique Richardson and Martin Willis, as well as my reviewers at Cambridge University Press, Ivan Kreilkamp and Will Abberley, whose insights have helped to sharpen the book's argument. Cambridge University Press has been a joy to work with, and I would particularly like to thank Bethany Thomas, George Laver, and the series editors for their input.

Financial support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council has aided this book's development, and a Visiting Research Fellowship at UCL's Institute of Advanced Studies provided an intellectually stimulating environment and access to useful resources. I would like to express my appreciation for staff at the Wellcome Library, British Library, Senate House Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Herzogin Anna Amalia Bibliothek, Hull History Centre, National Archives at Kew, North Carolina State University, and Tate Britain for their varied assistance. Gratitude is also due to Tanya Izzard for preparing the index. Chapter 5 employs material first published as "Unfeeling Brutes?": The 1875 Royal Commission on Vivisection and the Science of Suffering', *Victorian Review*, 45.1 (2019), 97–115, while an early version of Chapter 8 appeared as "A slashing review is a thing that they like": Vivisection and Victorian Literary Criticism', *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 29.1 (2024),

121–39. I am obliged to the reviewers of these articles for their critiques and the editors who oversaw their publication.

Family and friends have offered emotional, material, and intellectual support over many years. I owe a great deal to my siblings Miriam, Honor, and George who have been willing readers, reference-wrangers, and technological assistants. I am also grateful for my partner, James, who has remained staunchly supportive of my passions, interests, and career. Finally, my warmest and most heartfelt thanks are reserved for my parents, Peter and Bridget, who have sustained me in every possible way. This book is dedicated to them.

## *Abbreviations*

### ***Key Organisations***

|              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <i>BUAV</i>  | British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection   |
| <i>EDAVL</i> | Enfield and District Anti-Vivisection League   |
| <i>HL</i>    | Humanitarian League  |
| <i>IMC</i>   | International Medical Congress (1881)  |
| <i>LAVS</i>  | London Anti-Vivisection Society  |
| <i>NAVS</i>  | National Anti-Vivisection Society (previously the VSS)   |
| <i>RSPCA</i> | Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals<br>(previously the SPCA, it received royal assent in 1840)                        |
| <i>UCL</i>   | University College London  |
| <i>VSS</i>   | Society for the Protection of Animals liable to Vivisection,<br>better known as the Victoria Street Society (became the<br>NAVS in 1898) |

### ***Key Publications***

|              |   |
|--------------|---|
| <i>BMJ</i>   | <i>British Medical Journal</i>  |
| <i>OED</i>   | <i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> (Oxford: Oxford University Press),<br><a href="http://www.oed.com">www.oed.com</a>   |
| <i>RRCV1</i> | <i>Report of the Royal Commission on the Practice of Subjecting<br/>Live Animals to Experiments for Scientific Purposes, with<br/>Minutes of Evidence and Appendix</i> (London: 1875) |