Reasonable Creatures: British Equestrianism and Epistemological Responsibility in Late Modernity

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Girton College
July 2018

This dissertation is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Preface

This dissertation is the result of my own work and includes nothing which is the outcome of work done in collaboration.

It is not substantially the same as any that I have submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for a degree or diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution. I further state that no substantial part of my dissertation has already been submitted, or, is being concurrently submitted for any such degree, diploma or other qualification at the University of Cambridge or any other University or similar institution.

It does not exceed the prescribed word limit for the relevant Degree Committee

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Acknowledgements

This thesis has been completed with the invaluable support and encouragement of a great many people. I am extremely grateful for the insightful and considerate comments of my supervisor, Dr Matei Candea, who has been an excellent ally and helpful critic during the development of my ideas. Others at the University of Cambridge have been instrumental in this project, thanks are due particularly to Professor James Laidlaw, Dr David Sneath, Corinna Howland, Farhan Samanani and Hugh Williamson for their comments on working drafts. I wish to thank my interlocutors for sharing their experiences with me and for so generously allowing me into their lives. I feel heartfelt gratitude toward Kelly Marks, without whose support this PhD would not have been possible, and who has supported, guided and encouraged me throughout my equestrian and academic careers. Finally, I wish to thank my friends and family, and especially, my wife Hannah, who has lived this thesis alongside me, through pre-field planning, fieldwork, and writing up, she has enthusiastically supported me, contributed astute ideas, and listened to no end of horse stories.

Introduction

This thesis focusses on the ethical relationship between British amateur horse riders and their horses. More precisely, it argues that an important element of relating well, in this context, is *knowing well*, and it investigates the various sorts of epistemological responsibilities that the horse riders I studied negotiate and enact. The 'horse world' (as my participants call it) is a fragmented and heterogeneous domain (described in more detail in Chapters One and Two). Equestrian sport is no longer the pastime of an aristocratic and military elite, but encompasses multiple styles of riding, training and horse keeping, available to those with different tastes, ethical values, and economic resources. This diverse horse world is increasingly populated by one-horse owning leisure riders (as opposed to professional riders or aristocrats), three quarters of whom are female (BETA 2011, 2015), and these leisure rider/owners are the central focus of my study. Riding is a project of ambition and personal fulfilment for these riders, many of whom are serious in their endeavour to achieve competitive success in equestrian sport, but even more committed to the seductive goal of cultivating a state of profound partnership and 'real connection' with their horses. For my participants, their 'world revolves around the horse' (in one rider's words). They yearn to 'bond' with their horse so closely that horse and human are almost telepathically connected. They work towards creating embodied harmony so complete that the boundaries between bodies are felt to dissolve. They aim for a form of companionship and sensitive communication that empowers and enhances both partners, giving a soulful and liberating experience of both freedom *and* togetherness.

A recent 'revolution in horsemanship' (Miller and Lamb 2005) involves a number of training methods advertised as overturning traditional systems. The revolutionaries propose new ways of thinking about horses, particularly as potential partners with a right to choose, and as natural beings replete with complex instinctive behaviours that, proponents argue, ought to be better recognised. This movement is far from internally consistent, and an environment of invention, critique, counter-critique and debunking emanates within a consumer market of educational services and products aimed at training horses and teaching owners. Amid this critical and lively ethical/epistemological environment, I set out initially to investigate the varied practices at play for making sense

of horse behaviour, by asking: “How do British amateur horse riders variably interpret their horses' behaviours?” I quickly began to recognise that a slightly different question was more pressing for my research participants: “How *should* horse riders know their horses?” It became clear that the act of knowing horses was treated as a critically important, deeply rewarding, but ethically risky practice, with associated responsibilities, values and virtues. Riders felt an imperative that one *ought* to know their horse better, as well as an aspiration to feel empowered by a profound sense of togetherness that may come from knowing their horse well. My research questions became: “How/when/where/by whom is the knowing of horses constituted as both a critical ethical risk and a captivating goal?” and “What requirements for 'knowing well' does this multispecies context demand?”

Individualisation, choice, and the precariousness of 'real connection'

The equestrian example outlined above is situated within a broader socio-political context analysed variably as reflexive modernity (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), late modern reflexivity (Giddens 1991) or liquid modernity (Bauman 2013), and described as operating under neoliberal governance (Harvey 2007), or advancing technologies of responsibilization (Rose 1999). Each terminology refers in different ways to the capacity of contemporary Western contexts to constitute people as reflexive, flexible, responsible, choice-making individuals. Anthropologists have debated the extent to which the concept of neoliberalism can provide a coherent 'macro-context' (Collier 2012:189) or describe 'an overarching, unified, coherent global trend' (Gershon 2011:539, see also Freeman 2007, Wacquant 2010). In line with this critique, this thesis aims to demonstrate a multifactoral context for equestrian activities, involving economic aspects, kinship relations, linguistic ideologies, gender dynamics and the affordances of equine bodies and responses, to name just a few. However, particularly pertinent at the introduction of this case is the observation made by scholars of late modernity that an emphasis on individual choice in contemporary Western society relates to a precariousness, and preciousness, to the idea of being properly connected.

In this argument, an ever-expanding consumer market is described as encouraging individuals to make choices that are considered 'self-fulfilling' (Rose 1998:159). At the same time, the labour market demands and expects workers to be flexible, self-

improving, and mobile, to 'take charge of their own life' (Beck 2002:32). This means that people are no longer firmly rooted in their natal villages, nor in inherited classes, but are increasingly able (or expected, or forced) to 'construct their own biographies and self-identities from the diverse options available' (Atkinson 2010:19, we will explore this point ethnographically in Chapter One). Zygmunt Bauman's phrase 'liquid modernity', captures not only the flexibility required of workers and consumers, but the fluidity of the system they try to grapple with through their choices. Such fluidity abounds because individualist consumerism functions best when it demands that people keep changing their tastes, habits, affiliations and identities.

This brief overview of scholarship helps to depict a British climate in which a proliferation of choice is felt as both opportunity and burden, and in which people yearn for better connectivity, a desire which plays out in different ways. Rheana Parrenas, for example, demonstrates the immense, affective, and financial 'encounter value' (Donna Haraway's term 2008:46) that Western office workers get as tourists helping to care for rescued Orangutans in Sumatra (2012). In a very different example, Debora Cameron critically analyses the uneven gains afforded those at the top of what she calls the capitalist 'communication culture,' which tells its consumers they need to *buy in* to the idea of better connectivity (2000). It is clear that the very idea of connectivity (in various forms) is valuable in contemporary Britain, as something else that can (must) be chosen. In line with this, in *Animals in Modern Cultures*, sociologist Adrian Franklin suggests that a state of 'ontological insecurity' in Britain (1999:54) (typified by the flexibility and choice described above) leads to feelings of isolation and impermanence (1999:55) which are alleviated by the recent increased uptake in pet-keeping. However, my ethnography connects human/animal relationships to this scholarship on 'liquid modernity' differently. I will argue that human/horse relationships are not the *solution* to the late modern experience of ontological insecurity, but a particular example of it. I will demonstrate that this climate figures *epistemological practice* as a relational technique and ethical problem for individual horse owners to manage responsibly.

I will explore the various ways equestrians not only value the idea of profound connection, but also valorise the conditional adjective 'real', such that each rider considers only some of available epistemological options capable of representing the *real* horse well, and only some of the observable relationships between horse and rider qualified as

real connections. This shows that dynamics between the concepts of choice, nature and connectivity have not reached a complete state of 'postplurality' (Marilyn Strathern's term 1992:39, 135-6, 186). This is a condition Strathern describes associated with an influx of plurality and optionality, where everything would be rendered choosable, and 'nature' and 'connection' entirely subsumed under that logic as merely another type of thing an individual can choose how to engage with, as though all options for connecting (or not) were equally (in)valid. However, Strathern depicts English society as feeling 'nostalgic' for the loss of naturalised connectivity as it heads *towards*, rather than is lost for good over, the precipice in which choice reigns supreme. In line with this, I find the imperative that one *ought* to know certain things about one's real relatedness constitutes an interesting juxtaposition between the idea of a choosing, responsible individual and their natural (real) connectivity. While neither connectivity, nor nature, can be taken for granted in such a plural landscape, the concept of *really* real maintains ethical import and gives substance on which choices can be anchored and connections felt more binding. I can gently point towards other instances of the contemporary revival of this longstanding British trend to cherish and defend the concept (s) of 'real'; the increased popularity in tracing one's ancestry to uncover one's true roots (Edwards 1998, 2012), and the scandalous outrage that the media may have reached a state of 'post-truth' reporting (Mair 2017, 2018). Each gains ethical traction through naturalisation; the idea of a *really* real that (ought to) root, connect and bind people. This thesis traces amateur British horse riders' techniques of grasping towards the 'real' as well as their endeavours to achieve good connection, and, more precisely, it explores the relationship between these two projects. The next two sections consider how this project is situated in relation to two bodies of anthropological literature, the 'animal turn' and the anthropology of ethics

'Knowing well' as an ethnographic object in 'the animal turn'

My interest in how people think and speak about horses pushes against the current momentum within 'multispecies' literature (Kirksey and Helmreich 2010). The latter is predominantly characterised by an emphasis on embodied, ontological relationships *with* animals rather than symbolic, detached ways of thinking *about* them. Until the 1980's, anthropological interest in animals was principally concerned with ascertaining how the idea and image of certain animals worked as symbols that could be utilised for human

thinking, or to aid human social relationships[1] (Leach 1964, Tanner 1979, Levi-Strauss 1962, Turner 1985). However, the reflexive turn in anthropology, the development of new disciplines such as science and technology studies, animal studies and 'environmental humanities' (Rose et al, 2012), as well as the broader Western context of growing environmental concerns and interest in animals lives, have all contributed to a reconsideration of the anthropological approach to non-human animals (Ogden, Hall and Tanita 2013). This has included an active effort to 'bring the animal in' through 'multispecies ethnography' – a methodological shift towards making observations beyond the human (Noske 1989, 1997, Kirksey and Helmriech 2010). The 'animal turn' is a burgeoning and varied field, which includes an interest in the embodied experience of multispecies relatedness (Faier and Rofel 2014, Game 2001, Hayward 2010, Ingold e.g. 2000, 2013, Parrenas 2012), the sort of partnerships and cooperation possible between humans and animals (Hart 2006, Locke 2013, Nadasdy 2007, Vivieros de Castro 1998, Wipper 2000) and communicative relatedness with non-human animals (Brandt 2004, 2006, Knight 2005, Kohn 2007, 2013, Kuhl 2011, Smith 2003, Wipper 2000).

In this 'turn', ethnographies of radically different ways of knowing the world are often described in comparison to Western epistemology (e.g. Vivieros de Castro 1998, Nadasdy 2007). The Western way of knowing is often described as 'modern' and exemplified by Descartes' philosophy, which not only holds human as distinct from animal, but also regards mind as distinct from material body, and interior self, distinct from exterior other (e.g. Ingold, 2000, 2006, 2013, Palsson 1996:65-66, 76, Willerslev 2007:13-15). Tim Ingold has been forefront in the rejection of this ‘sterile’ Cartesian system of knowing (2000:167), both in order to better understand non-Euro-American human others, and in order to better connect with the phenomenology of being-in-the-world (2000:40-50, also Descola and Palsson 1996:8, Mullin 2002:389). A central problem identified with the Cartesian model is its lack of ability to account for non-human personhood, as Rane Willerslev describes, ‘For us in the West... Animals are understood to be wholly natural beings, and their behaviour is typically explained as automatic and instinctive’

[1]Other early considerations of animality in anthropology include the now disbanded evolutionary models which considered some human groups closer to animality than others, and an interest in the way non-human species function within the economy of hunter-gatherer group (see Shanklin 1985, Mullin 1999) I focus instead on symbolic anthropology as a background, followed by the subsequent efforts to 'bring the animal in', as these moves situate my effort to reconsider human thinking (and thinking about thinking) as *part of* relations with personable animals.

(2007:2Descola 2013:60-77, see also Hurn 2012:30-31, 41-45).

While anthropologists interested in human/animal relatedness are substantially varied in the mechanisms through which they explicitly reject Cartesian thinking, the tendency to do so has been tidal, on both academic and ethical grounds. Alf Hornborg's 2006 essay compares animism, fetishism and objectivism, and acts as an exemplar of the way modernity is ousted in order to advocate for better acknowledgement of, and achievement of, relatedness. He argues, 'The social condition of modernity … amplifies a pervasive (Cartesian) dissociation of self from non-self that...is at the root of both solipsism and objectivism.' (2006:28-9). For Hornborg, modern epistemology inevitably entails, 'a relinquishment of responsibility' (2006:29) for the 'natural' objects that are passively known. The problem is not that Western people *cannot* have moral relationships with the non-human environment, he clarifies, but that modern epistemology enables them to 'sever' their *sense* of relatedness such that they can shut off from the moral predicaments of their relationships:

> We probably all have treasured spaces in our lives where we are practicing animist, in the sense that engagement and 'relatedness' take precedence over detached observation ... Our training in the skills of modernist detachment and objectification is contextual, as illustrated by ...the industrial butcher who privately cares for his dog. ... Science and technology does not so much make us into robots, as make specific parts of our behaviour robot-like.
>
> (Hornborg 2006:23-24)

Not all 'animal turn' scholars would agree with Hornborg's formulation of animism, modernity, or relatedness; however, his argument is a strong example of the tendency among multispecies ethnographies to position Cartesian modern thinking as not only opposite to, but practically immiscible with, relational registers of knowing. Hornborg's point (which resonates with the broader trend) is that ethical relationships with non-human others are afforded only by evading, rebuking or momentarily escaping the epistemological apparatus of modernity.

This comparison oversimplifies the complexity of Western concepts of personhood (Murray 1993, Laidlaw 2010:154, Hurn 2012:41). Bruno Latour has convincingly argued that peoples' engagement with that model has never been straightforward, consistent or unreflexive; that '*We have never been modern*' (1991), a sentiment Donna Haraway

echoed with her follow up call, 'We have never been human' (2004:2,3). Latour and Haraway, along with other Science and Technology Studies scholars, emphasise how the dualistic divisions between nature and culture, human and non-human, retain a currency and import in Western thinking but require ongoing management and creative construction (see also Barad 2003, Birke 1991, Birke, Bryld and Lykke 2004 Despret 2004, 2013, 2016). This scholarship has convincingly argued that modern forms of knowledge are not deprived of relatedness, but are constituted relationally through embodied, social, political contexts. Nevertheless, in this literature, objective(ish) knowledge that attempts to distinguish thought from world is still considered starkly at odds with the relational dynamics it exists within. Relational ways of knowing, that *acknowledge* the affective, responsive, interactive body, are proposed as a better alternative, more likely to enable the flourishing of human and non-human interactants (Haraway 2003, 2008, Despret 2004, 2013, 2016). I adopt, from this literature, an interest in attending to the sorts of embodied thinking-practice afforded by horses and equestrian environments. My project is not merely to show that sociable relations with animals *do* exist in the West (an ethnographic gap which is steadily being attended, for example, Serpell 1986, Knight 2005, Swabe 2005, Alger and Alger 1999, Sanders and Arluke 1996, Irvine 2008), but to investigate how animals are known as (or like) persons within/despite a context described on the one hand as harbouring a deep commitment to Cartesian modernity, and on the other, as demonstrating late-, or post-modern 'ontological instability'. Counter to the main thrust of the multispecies literature, I will demonstrate specific forms of representational knowing, individualistic thinking, epistemological doubt, and objectification that are *central* to the practice of ethical, empathic, embodied knowing of horses in this context.

'Knowing well' as an ethnographic object for ethical anthropology

The reflexive and evaluative practices of British amateur equestrians lend themselves well towards engaging with the contemporary anthropological 'ethical turn' (Faubion 2001). Emerging debates within this scholarship can be seen to contend with the extent and forms of *epistemological* practice that are universally, or locally, relevant to the ethical dimension of life. I have divided this section into three sorts of epistemological practice that feature in ethnographies of ethics; knowledge about the other, knowledge about the self, and knowledge about the predicament, and I will begin with the later.

For some anthropologists of ethics, ethical predicaments are characteristically unfathomable, complex, and messy. In these descriptions, not-knowing seems a constituent part of the moral condition, such that, tragically, one cannot clearly and completely know the impact of one’s actions, nor the causes of ones' hardships (e.g. Das 2013, 2014, Mattingly 2008, 2013, 2014). There is an affinity here with multispecies literature, for example, Cheryl Mattingly describes an antiquarian humanist 'first-person' virtue ethics that 'emphasises the fragility of life, the sociality of being and the vulnerability of action in the face of circumstances out of human control' (2013:168), which (somewhat ironically) resonates with the entanglements that Donna Haraway describes in which each movement one makes unknowingly affects how others live and die (2008:45-69, 81-82). For some, *recognising* this chronic un-knowability is ethically important itself, such that to render certainty in knowing one’s ethical relations with others would be to oversimplify the encounter. When considering an ethic of non-cruelty in Vedic texts, Veena Das describes stories in which people relate to animals through a sense of togetherness, but also show 'a certain difficulty of reality [that] there are aspects of our existence from which we are fenced out.' (2013:18) The stories evoke a known, not-knowing that she suggests is endemic to human relationships with animals, beyond the particularity of the texts. It is this form of not-knowing that she feels is absent from 'ontological' descriptions of human/animal relatedness, such as those of Vivieros de Castro (2013:18, 28-30).

In contrast, Webb Keane describes the process of 'objectification' – of describing an ethical event in explicit and recognisable terms, from a generalisable, 'third person stance' - as a crucial mechanism in ethical life. He doesn't use the term to suggest ethical predicaments are holistically knowable but to demonstrate how the act of recognising a situation – rendering it recognisable, even if only on the 'surface' – is indispensable for ethical practice (2010: 74-74, 87-82, 2015:68-69, 159-160, 208). Different, yet again, is David Graeber's assertion that the ultimate state of reality is 'simply irrelevant' to the way value functions – as 'players' engage with the 'game' of obtaining values in the eyes of others (2013:231). Across this variant emphasis on knowing, or not-knowing the reality of ethical predicaments, these scholars are similar in that they argue that certain epistemological practices feature universally, as constitutive parts of ethical conduct. In other words, ethics, in these accounts, relies upon knowing/not-knowing in certain ways.

In contrast, and in dialogue with these positions, I will investigate how the concept of grasping/not-grasping 'real' holds ethical traction, not as a *universal* mechanism within human ethical life, but as a particularly valuable and important idea within this late modern, multispecies context.

I will investigate the cultivation of certain epistemological skills that are the subject of ethical evaluation, not only the means, such as empathy. Anthropologists have investigated empathic knowledge from a phenomenological, embodied perspective (Throop 2008, 2010, 2012, Csordas 2008); as the intersubjective basis for the functioning of verbal dialogue (Rumsey 2010, Sidnell 2010, Duranti: 2006, 2008, 2010 Keane 2015:93-95); or in relation to developmental psychology where shared attention, mutual gaze, and theory of mind have been identified as important milestones in child development (Keane 2015:45-47, 80-83, Tomasello and Carpenter 2007). Mattingly is particularly useful in her exploration of narrative form as a means of imperfect 'mind-reading' (2008). In each of these cases, a 'basic' (Hollan 2012:71) form of provisional, mutual, working knowledge of the Other features as a universal human, moral, trait (though not all authors agree on exactly what constitutes this shared trait). However, another theme in anthropological research is to demonstrate the variety (or 'vicissitudes' Throop 2010) of possible empathic experiences, including cross cultural variation in the way in which statements about intentions and experiences are, themselves, ethically ambiguous, prohibited, or sanctioned (Duranti, 2015:233-242, Hollan and Throop 2011, Hollan 2012:72-75, Luhrmann 2012, Ochs 1982, Robbins and Rumsey 2008, Throop 2008). Most of the variety in the ethnographic record to date involves instances where knowledge of internal state is considered inappropriate or unknowable (though see Hermann 2011 for a contrasting example in Fiji), demonstrated in contrast with Western traditions of empathising that are, in fact, ethnographically under-explored. I contribute a comparative ethnography in which empathic knowledge is scrutinised, but also sacralised. In this case, enhanced understanding is not (only) the means, but also the *aim*, of riders' projects of self-improvement. Furthermore, I provide a description of the ethics that accompany empathic relations with a non-verbal other, including the responsibility that is entailed when speaking-for another. This is an especially interesting problem within a geographical/historical context that particularly links intentionality to voice (Duranti 1993, Rosaldo 1989). While anthropologists who have taken an interest in human/animal ethical relationships have focussed on embodied attentiveness (Dave 2014, Rose 2002,

2007), it remains to be investigated how embodied registers of knowledge might enter into verbal dialogue and constitute an ethics of speaking-for and knowing well.

Finally, the anthropology of ethics has been intimately tied up with the question of how people think about themselves; how one reflects on oneself in line with particular values and virtues, gains self-insight, and/or is driven to give an account of one's behaviour. For example, Jarrett Zigon proposes moments of 'moral breakdown' as deliberative ethical events that occur as ruptures from the usual, habitual patterns which characterise morality (2007). In contrast, James Laidlaw describes Foucault's notion of 'problematisation' as the historically variant, self-evaluative aspect of ordinary life (2013:118-124), while Lambek likens ethical evaluation to an act like speaking, something that can be done 'intuitively' (2010b:43-44). Many scholars have been keen to emphasise that self-evaluation is never a solitary event, but occurs within particular political conditions and interactive situations (e.g. Laidlaw 2013:124, Lambek 2010:16, Mattingly 2012:163). Webb Keane, for example, emphasises the intersubjective constitution of an individual's 'stance', which occurs through triangulation with an interaction partner and a shared matter of interest (2015:154-156, following DuBois 2007). Michael Lempert calls for ethnographic research to investigate variety in self-evaluative ethical projects; not only in terms of the different virtues that people might be drawn to cultivate in various predicaments, but in terms of the *forms* of reflection at play also. He asserts, ' reflection comes in many more forms then a concept like "choice" lets on, and in many more degrees and modalities than a trope like moral "breakdown" allows. (2014:469 see also Laidlaw, 2013, 2014, Keane 2014). Reflexivity itself (or particular forms of it, or even lack of it) can be pursued (reflexively, see Laidlaw 2013:151-154) as an ethical virtue in and of itself, for example, the academic valorisation of a highly abstract and critical form of reflection is described by Bourdieu as 'the scholastic point of view' (1990). In comparison, Saba Mahmood describes Egyptian Muslims following piety movements as cultivating an embodied state of submission so complete that it is instinctive, rather than deliberative (2005:e.g. 137). This ethnography contributes a comparative example of metacognitive reflexivity (Mair 2018), that is, how people *think* about thinking, or evaluate their processes of evaluation. The multispecies environment contributes a novel angle here, as I will investigate how horses have an influence on the forms of reflexivity valued within this sphere: horses respond positively or negatively to the variant embodied thinking practice of riders. We will see how horses are thought to act as 'mirrors to the soul', revealing aspects of riders

interiorities that were unbeknownst even to them, and how this sort of intersubjective reflexivity is valued by British amateur riders within the aim of obtaining a 'real connection' with their horse.

Summary of the argument and overview of the chapters

My principle assertion is that relating well, in this context, is largely about knowing well. In making this assertion, I position myself against certain arguments within the animal turn that consider affective, embodied ways of knowing a radical alternative to the 'detached', representational model of thinking associated with modernity. I will demonstrate that objective, individualistic, and representational thinking are central to the forms of ethical, embodied relatedness that exist between British amateur riders and their horses. I will show that British horse riders harbour a complex and deeply ambiguous engagement with representational thinking; a sincere commitment to the idea of accurate truth, but also the perpetual desire to overcome the scepticism and interpretative effort that this commitment to truth entails.

In Chapter One, I will introduce British equestrianism as a changing context for horse/human relationships, in which a broadening demographic and increasing consumer market provide an impressive arena of choice for horse owners. I compare my ethnography with that of Rebecca Cassidy's study of horse racing society in Newmarket, where a stable hierarchy between different classes of people and different qualities of horse was maintained via the idioms of nature, breeding and heritage. In contrast, in my ethnography, connectivity and a sense of belonging were organised more prominently around the notion of individual choice, and I show the importance of ambition, individualism, and responsibility. Following Marilyn Strathern's analysis in *After Nature* (1992), I describe a tensive, and at times, paradoxical relationship at play between the idea of 'choice' and that of 'nature'. I demonstrate social and moral instability associated with that choice/nature conceptual tension, and I show that 'epistemological responsibility' answers to, and recreates, this precarity. In sum, this chapter establishes 'horsiness' as an exclusive, natural *and* chosen category of person and introduces the concept of 'epistemological responsibility' as key to my participants' projects to forge 'real connections' with their horses.

Chapter Two continues the exploration of epistemological responsibility through attending to the 'revolution' in horse training practices. In particular, I investigate an imperative on owners to remain 'open minded' and to 'learn from the horse'. In order to describe the specificity of this imperative, I compare this equestrian 'open mindedness' with two other sorts of 'open'; that described within multispecies literature as a way of being available and attentive to the animal (Haraway 2008, Ingold 2000, 2006), and that described by those following a Foucauldian interest in resisting normativity through the creation of 'critical openings' (Dave 2011). British amateur horse riders demonstrate a dual project of recognising/objectifying their horses in highly specific, narrow terms, on the one hand, and maintaining a status of 'open-mindedness' by demonstrating their own epistemological flexibility and independence, on the other. I argue that the multispecies version of being 'open' to connecting with animals is not sufficient for describing the sort of 'open-mindedness' riders cultivate and critique, because the former contends 'openness' as an alternative to objective thinking, while the latter maintains an ethical, critical commitment to the idea of objective truth and accurate knowledge when representing the real horse.

Chapter Three develops this theme of engaging with the ethics surrounding descriptions of horses. In this chapter I attend to narrative form and describe the responsibility that owners have to narrate their relationship to their horse well. I demonstrate two particularly common narrative genres in the equestrian world; the triumph narrative (which celebrates rider bravery) and the care giving narrative (which sees the horse as needy patient). I argue that these narrative forms tie the human character and equine character together, so that descriptions of horses are always already formative of the sorts of ethical judgements that will apply to the human. I argue that experiences of particularly 'blurred' human/animal intersubjectivity can cause ethical problems since they demonstrate moments of 'dysnarrativia' (Bruner 1990:222), where riders do not know which story they are living in.

Having established the import of knowing horses well in Chapters One to Three, Chapter Four takes on the interesting question of why riders might describe their horses in non-real terms. The subject matter of this chapter is 'infantilization' (describing horses as likened to human children), which is prevalent among riders - but so is the internal

critique of infantilization. In this chapter I investigate instances where horse owners rhetorically mark their own descriptions or behaviours as somehow *not* really-real, and I ask what ethical work the not-real register of knowledge might afford. I describe three local registers of speaking and relating to words, which I call 'care with words', 'the language of tough love,' and 'words from the heart.' I explain the way infantilistic language is managed and moderated within, and between, these different speech registers. I argue against the suggestion that metaphorical knowledge of animals is more 'detached' than more ontological alternatives, and I show that management of the not-real is part of British amateur horse riders' ethical conduct.

Chapters One through Four have demonstrated the epistemological problems managed by horse riders, such that the horses are performed as difficult things to *really* know. Chapter Five responds to this assertion by asking, in this context, what might constitute moments that qualify *as* 'real connection'? In this chapter I foreground the affective and embodied relationship between horse and rider, and I argue that embodied relationality and perceptions of felt 'togetherness' are not *departures* from the critical and reflective environment established in previous chapters. I show that the specific sort of embodied relationality that riders desire is valuable precisely within this particular epistemological context. Working towards real connection requires cultivating certain ways of thinking/moving in both horse and human bodies, such that they might come into harmony together. This pedagogical work grapples with, and performs, a number of epistemological risks; riders' ability to author and compose their own thoughts, to know their own bodies, and to know another's body in a way in order to recognise and enable an enhanced, but not 'manufactured' or 'dominating' relationship. There are gendered aspect to many of these concerns, which are fundamentally about the risks and promises of connecting to others via the fallible, illusive, and vulnerable body.

In the conclusion I will gather together contributions to the animal turn and the ethical turn from the preceding chapters. I will draw out the variant ways that the notions of 'choice' and 'nature' have featured as important concepts throughout the thesis, and I will emphasise that these horse riders are constituted as responsible not only for choice-making, but for what and how they *know* (about others, selves, reality). While other ethnographies of ethics have described the principle site of ethics as the problems people face when working out 'best good' (Mattingly 2012), dealing with 'difficult reality' (Das

2014) or a value conflict (Robbins 2007, 2013); I emphasise the ethical, epistemological work involved in *ascertaining reality* about the state of entanglement one is engaged in and required to react to. Crucially, I will show that certain forms of detached or objective thinking are inseparable from British amateur riders' projects to achieve profound embodied connectedness with their horses. I will explain how my argument for the importance of epistemological responsibility is particularly pertinent for this multispecies, late modern context where 'reality' and 'connectivity' are related, risky, valorised, concepts. I will emphasise the importance of language to human ethical relationships with non-humans, will propose the contribution multispecies literature can make to the anthropology of ethics, and call for further ethnographic research to investigate varieties of ways in which empathic knowledge is pursued, taught, and evaluated.

Methodology

My research involved 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation, unstructured interviews, and Dictaphone recordings at three primary field sites; a livery yard, equine college, and alternative training centre. In order to aid my research, I took a horse with me into the field. I will discuss four aspects of my methodology in detail; my relation to the field, the selection and recruitment of field sites and participants, data collection and management, and the challenges of accounting for 'the horse in the data.'

My relation to the field

While ethnography has traditionally been associated with the participant observation of exotic, or radically different, groups of people in faraway places (as often attributed to Malinowski's example), 'anthropology at (or near) home' or 'insider anthropology' (Messerschmidt 1981) is now a widely accepted cornerstone of the academe (see Pierano 1998, Reed-Danahay 1997, for example, Abu-Lughod 1986, 1988, Cohen 1982, Schnieder 1980, Strathern and Oxford, 1981). These insider studies prompt reflexive consideration of how intimate familiarity with the field site may provide particular affordances and challenges (Kanuha 2000, Roth 2009, Ellis 2007). Ethnographic descriptions of multispecies relatedness have often taken an autoethnographic approach, describing in detail the phenomenological experience of authors' own encounters with

animals or non-human environments (Game 2001, Locke 2017, Haraway 2008, Hayward 2010). A central aim of this methodology section is to explain why this is not the approach that I have taken.

In my case, I am not only an 'insider' ethnographer investigating my natal country, in my mother tongue, but furthermore, I conduct research in a particular sphere of activity – equestrianism - in which I have achieved a considerable level of expertise. This is an uncomfortable fact for the novice ethnographer. I recognise in my methods training courses and in the writings of my ethnographic role models an ethically, politically and aesthetically charged imperative to enter the field site humbly, as a clumsy alien, or naïve child, who understands little and respects a lot. However, it is my equestrian background that led me to anthropology (rather than the other way around). I see myself not as an 'opportunistic anthropologist' (Adler and Adler 1987) who studies communities they are already a member of, so much as an equestrian who harnesses *anthropology* opportunistically to satiate an epistemological hunger that my horsey friends (of both species) instilled in me. It is therefore important to explicitly describe and reflect on the relatedness between my equestrian and anthropological endeavours, as this contextualises the rest of the thesis and explains many of my methodological and analytical decisions.

While I am from a non-horsey family, (as are many other contemporary riders, discussed in Chapter One), I was obsessed with horses from a young age, eventually landing a voluntary role at a rescue stables at age 11. I knew every horse and owner in the vicinity and learned much from a local horse dealer whose ponies I rode to get them 'child-ready' and then to 'show off' to clients – wealthy families looking to buy ponies for their children. Realising an opportunity, I began buying and selling ponies myself. I got this initiative off the ground with cash from weekend work, but soon I had sold several horses and was amassing enough money to cover the vet bills and competition entries, and to buy better quality horses. I developed a reputation for being able to get horses to 'go well' and started charging to train others' badly behaved horses, all before I had sat my A levels. Enthused, upon leaving school, I started learning everything I could, spending time apprenticing in a variety of training yards, including three months taming wild mustangs in Colorado when I was 19. Among my efforts to learn, I passed the 'Intelligent Horsemanship' (IH) range of exams. This is an educational organisation central to the 'revolution' in horsemanship, affiliated to Californian horse whisperer Monty Roberts, and

run by his British protégé, previous champion jockey, Kelly Marks. At 21, I became the youngest ever recommended trainer of IH, at 24 I became the first woman to ride unbroken horses in Roberts' demonstrations. In many ways, this was the time of my life. I appeared in demonstrations in front of audiences of up to 2000, in various countries, speaking into a radio mike about horse psychology, and achieving success after success with the challenging horses I rode. I wrote answers to 'ask the expert' sections in horsey magazines, composed and marked 'horse psychology' exams for IH, was featured on question and answer panels at large equestrian events, and took part in a number of television series on 'Horse and Country' Sky TV channel. The most rewarding aspect of this developing career was the capacity to get horses and people behaving better towards one another, I could instigate significant changes in a dysfunctional relationship so that horses stopped biting (for example) people stopped hitting, and nobody (of either species) was, or felt, at risk of being killed. This is a significant achievement, and one I continue to be proud of. However, during this time, I also began to feel uneasy about my old horse-selling banter creeping into my interactions with clients and students.

I can sell almost any horse to any buyer. This is something I am half proud, half ashamed of – horse dealers have a reputation in the equestrian world similar to second hand car salesman, and not without cause. Of course, I *didn't* sell the wrong horses to the wrong people (I hope), but sometimes, I could almost be caught up in my own rhetorical capacities. I knew just what to say, just how to pitch it, just what character definition might make *this* behaviour appealing to *this* sort of person. In my horse training work, I became aware that I would get out of the car in a new stable yard and reconfigure the training descriptions to suit the sensibilities of each new client; this one needs to hear 'respect', while that one needs to hear 'trust', this one wants efficiency, this one emotionality. As I began to tune in to the training narratives I was advocating, I became aware of what – at that stage - seemed an absurdity in some of the verbosity of the equestrian world at large. Hypocrisy, in particular, stood out to me at every turn; how was it that someone could talk about their desire to win the horse's trust, in one moment, and joke about the horse's stupidity and insolence the next? How could a horse need 'rescuing' from one owner whose biggest crime was not to name him, only to be often whipped in his new 'loving' home? And, if I believed that self-regulation was an ethically valid thing to teach a horse, why did I deliberatively dress it up in a language of 'freedom' for my clients? These are the rough, early questions which provoked me to begin my study of

social anthropology, as a mature undergraduate student, and which have now been drastically reconfigured into the research questions described above.

An ethical and methodological advantage of this intimacy with my field site is that I began fieldwork with a sensitive understanding of horse riders' interests, values, and emotional experiences. This meant I could tread carefully in forging amicable relationships with new participants, and also that my research efforts were welcomed enthusiastically, participants were eager to hear about the research and the process was very dialogical. While writing up, I gave many talks about my research to riding clubs and was asked to write articles for the Intelligent Horsemanship magazine. During my studies, I have raised my research interests with my equestrian friends, teachers and clients, and have had my intrigue restoked repeatedly by the interesting fact that many equestrians consider these questions as urgent and important as I have.

One challenge of this familiarity is that I was liable to overlook some aspects which an outsider anthropologist may have better recognised (Hayano 1979:102), parts of the practical workings of horse/human relatedness only really became visible to me *as* phenomena when discussed with my supervisor, sometimes, long after the event. Details, for example, of the equipment used, or aspects of equestrian terminology, were only revealed to me as interesting, rather than obvious, while writing up, and may have been ethnographically recorded and explored in more detail by an outsider anthropologist.

Another complication I faced was whether to withhold my own expertise from situations where horses and humans were putting one another at risk. I can find little literature from other expert-ethnographers to guide me on the ethical and methodological dynamics involved, though some nurse-ethnographers have written about similar experiences of occupying mutually contrasting roles (Simmons 2007, Burns et al 2012). The Ethical Guidelines of the Association of Social Anthropologists states: "The researcher should try to minimise disturbances both to subjects themselves and to the subjects' relationships with their environment" (ASA 1.2.a). There were many relational dynamics between horses and humans that were reminiscent of those I had been employed to 'fix' in my previous career, yet I particularly wanted to study how equine behaviour was evaluated and managed outside of my own approach. This wasn't just a matter of whether to practically help in each case, but also of how open and honest to be with my participants.

If they knew me to be a horse trainer, the dynamic was very different in times of relational dysfunction than if they knew me merely as a researcher. Interestingly, they would be more inclined to watch their language and defend their approach in the former case. A trainer with my 'horse whispering' associations represented a *moral* observer, whereas an academic researcher was considered naïve and neutral. I handled this complexity by trying to background, rather than hide, my own training. I introduced myself primarily as an ethnographer, mentioning my own equestrian background was mostly with youngsters and problem horses, if I was asked. I raised my previous affiliation to the 'alternative movement' only when it would have felt dishonest not to, for example, if asked directly, or if it would have been disingenuous to take part in a conversation about that training system without admitting my experience with it. In fact, nobody asked for my behavioural opinion on their horses during fieldwork, they quickly accepted me as another horse owner, and interested researcher, rather than as somebody with a particular affiliation and knowledge. On one occasion I offered help without being asked, and it was accepted. This was a child’s pony who was bucking the child off, I had arranged to watch her ride for research purposes, and after the 11-year-old was flung off once into the fence, and got a nosebleed, I felt the only ethical thing to do was to step in and advise how to get things back on track, which involved several sessions of teaching the child, pony and her mother. This went well, but forever changed the dynamic of that research relationship, as they became very dependent on my advice and would call me frequently with all manner of equestrian questions – I continued to record these encounters and included them within my field notes and analyses.

Sourcing participants and choosing field sites

One of the ways I managed the ethics and practicalities of my intimacy with the field was through carefully choosing where and how to conduct research. It was beneficial for me to predominantly 'start afresh', contacting and meeting participants as strangers, rather than relying upon my pre-existing equestrian networks. I found a number of potential livery yards (where horses are kept) through a google search and chose one that seemed 'middle of the road'; in terms of finances, facilities, size, and approach to horse riding and training. By chance, the yard manager's wife was chairman of the local riding club, which I joined, and this led to further participant recruitment. I followed ASA and AAA guidelines in obtaining clear, informed constant from research participants (ASA 1.4,

AAA A.B.2), and in re-establishing this consent regularly during fieldwork, when asking to attend a certain event, or to take photographs, or make notes. Various instructors, farriers, vets and saddle fitters visited the yard, some of whom also joined the study, and in shadowing their visits to other yards, I recruited further horse owners. This fresh networking afforded me opportunities to notice things about my new friends that may have been too familiar to acknowledge with my longstanding equestrian community. It also enabled me to introduce myself as researcher from the very beginning, and to remind participants of this fact regularly, therefore avoiding some of the ethical challenges of 'deciding what to tell' when researching intimate others (Ellis 2009).

I was pleased that I was quickly adopted into a student-researcher-friend sort of role, and not treated as a specialist, expert, nor as an affiliate loyal to one side of a 'revolution'. This was aided by three things; firstly, the fact that while I recognise I have a good way to influence horse and human behaviour, I genuinely *am* open to questioning much of the ethics of equestrianism – even those I have promoted, such that it was a relief for me to return to the position of student, rather than expert, and to truly explore other ways of working out ‘best good’. I am sure the authenticity of my inquiry helped. Secondly, I located myself within a field that I am an eager novice within; the world of competitive amateur eventing (dressage, show jumping, cross-country riding). I did not have to hide my competence here, I knew little of the rules, and my riding technique needed much improvement. Finally, the fact I had a horse with me helped immensely. This is an unusual ethnographic method, though Karen Lane's employment of her Wheaton Terrier as research assistant acts as a trailblazer; she found Torriden 'authenticated being there' and initiated conversations (2015). George, my equine 'research assistant,' gave me a reason to be legitimately and actively engaged in equestrian worlds at least twice a day, provided me with an authentic investment in conversations about horses, and meant that I could adopt the role of student, taking George to many different instructors and clinicians and experiencing the pedagogical process first-hand.

George, I borrowed from Kelly Marks, my friend and mentor. He was a beautiful, athletic, long legged youngster, who had the potential for competitive success but was lacking the education. He was ideal in prompting numerous discussions with owners and trainers alike, and perhaps most useful in enabling me to embark on long 'hacks out' – riding out across the countryside, with my participants, talking about horses (and, for

some, moaning about husbands) all the way. However, George's presence raised some ethical concerns too. While I wanted to challenge, and reconsider, aspects of my own ethical conduct, I did not want George to be subject to any especially harsh treatment. While the multispecies movement advocates recognition of animals as persons, our disciplinary ethical guidelines are yet to substantially engage with what this might mean about anthropologists' responsibilities towards animals. The ASA guidelines do not mention non-humans at all, and AAA code contains a brief reference directed towards primatological research (A2, Hurn 2012:211). George's vulnerable position with relation to my research factored into my selection of field site, and sometimes into my decisions about which instructors to attend lessons with on George, and which to watch from the sidelines. While I was open to subjecting him (us) to some training that I was unsure about while I learned, I did not put him (us) in a position where he would be, what I considered, *violently* treated (even though I was researching the sheer variety of meanings the term 'violence' holds, and reconsidering my own position).

During early fieldwork, I became interested in the broader pedagogical environment that the livery yard was situated within, and so I initiated a second field site, at an equestrian college where 'traditional' horsemanship is taught. I enrolled on a number of courses as a student, explaining to the course convener, and my teachers about my research in advance, and introducing myself fully to my fellow students on our first meeting. I trained towards and took my 'riding and road safety' and British Horse Society Stage 2 stable management and riding exam during fieldwork – this is not a particularly high standard but qualifies one to work as a groom. I also contacted a number of alternative horse trainers from strains other than the methods I was already trained within, and they were eager to take part in the research. One in particular became a longstanding research participant, I regularly accompanied her to visit her clients, and we had long conversations in her car afterwards. I also conducted some research, later into my fieldwork, on the alternative horse training courses that I had previously taught on, though when it came to writing up, I chose to focus more regularly on the systems that were new to me. While my research brought me into contact with over a hundred riders in varying degrees of engagement, I count 35 riders among my close, long-term participants. Most of these were female (all but two), and most were amateurs (six were instructors).

Data collection and management

A typical fieldwork day would involve arriving at the yard at 7am to put George out in the field, alongside other owners who visited before work. I would take my time with stable chores, so as to catch the later morning shift that included those who work part time, flexibly, or not at all, and might 'do' their horses any time before 9. Then I would accompany participants who were riding during the day or had planned excursions – perhaps a trip in the horse lorry to a nearby instructor, or to hire an arena, or to take the horse to the beach. Or, I would accompany instructors in their beaten-up cars, travelling from yard to yard teaching lessons – working owners would forgo their lunch break at work, or finish early, or would sneak a riding lesson in when supposedly 'working from home.' In the afternoon, the yard would become busy from around 4pm until 8.30, with owners completing stable chores and riding in the arena, or in the summer, out on hacks. Weekends were the busiest time, with competitions and clinics to attend, long hacks out in the afternoons, or seized time to get chores done – the muck heap stacked, the tack cleaned, the horse bathed, the lorry cleaned out. There were regular occasions when my participants would socialise together too, and I attended birthday drinks, 'yard family' meals, bonfire night, summer barbecues, a day out to the races, and the Christmas party.

Most of the equestrian activities I took part in were unconducive to easy note-taking. My early attempt at a paper notebook got rained on, trodden on, and muddied, before I stopped bringing any form of note taking equipment into the field. This contributed to my developing reliance on the Dictaphone for collecting data. I found it a very useful technique to switch the Dictaphone on, at the beginning of a ride, and put it in my pocket (leaving the zip open) so that my hands, and mind, were free to concentrate on riding. I would then recall the riding experience from memory when writing field notes in the evening, before listening back to the Dictaphone recording of the spoken words. This was incredibly informative, since precise turns of phrase were difficult to remember during an hour or more of riding – particularly when being instructed – and I felt the specificity of the wording was important. I also used the Dictaphone to record some of the lessons I observed (rather than took part in), since I felt it was less obtrusive than scribbling notes or videoing and enabled me to keep my eyes up to observe the three-way equestrian interaction between rider, horse and instructor.

The Dictaphone presents some ethical considerations, particularly in that it is a stealthy instrument that is easily unseen and quickly forgotten, so I made sure to seek permission from participants before switching it on each and every time, and when any new parties joined in on conversations that were already being recorded (ASA 1.4.d). Occasionally participants seemed embarrassed at the idea of being recorded, particularly in relation to the equestrian propensity for swearing (see Chapter Four), but quickly this awkwardness passed. A methodological problem associated with the Dictaphone involves the tendency to lean heavily on dialogue and verbal transcripts when analysing my data and evidencing my arguments. The Dictaphone both supported my pre-existing interest in the textual dimension of the non-verbal equestrian relationship, and it drew me further to attend particularly to the spoken words *about* the horse. The thesis has benefited greatly from my supervisor's advice to invest in thicker ethnographic descriptions than my first drafts were likely to contain, replacing dialogue with description and observing how this effected the argument. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that my interest in textuality has shaped the thesis, and this is both a loss, and a gain, compared to the sorts of project that might otherwise have emerged. I would argue there are good grounds for this methodological bias, since questions about the ethical work of language are valid grounds for enquiry. These questions are of explicit interest to my participants, and, furthermore, the 'speaking-for' aspect of human/animal relations is less frequently attended in contemporary multispecies ethnographies which tend to foreground embodied registers of knowing.

The horse in the data

Completing ethnography that investigates horse/human relationships provokes consideration of how to incorporate horses within my observations and analyses. Anthropologists have utilised a number of methodological models for considering the non-human within their research. Some advocate the person-like qualities of the non-humans they study, arguing that a degree of intersubjectivity, empathy, and understanding can enable valid observations of animals-as-subjects (Alger and Alger 1999, Hurn 2012:31, Irvine 2008, Milton 2005, Noske 1991). Others take their *human informants* descriptions of animal-persons as really real, levelling the political hierarchy of researcher-researched at the same time as dismantling the species-ist assumptions of 'Western' knowledge (Nadasdy 2007, Vivieros De Castro 1998). A further approach is to

utilise ethological research to aid observations made of non-humans alongside humans, which has been particularly useful within ethnoprimatology (e.g. Fuentes 2010). Some chart the 'rhizomic' assemblage's animals and humans are engaged within as though completing a complex ecological mapping (Tsing 2012, 2015), or, inspired by Bruno Latours' Actor Network Theory 'bring the animal in' by recognising the affordances and reliances that co-construct non-human and human lifeworld's (Latour 2005 e.g. Callon 1984). These models are not mutually exclusive, though a significant variable seems to be the degree to which the non-human's point of view is foregrounded (as in Alger and Alger 1999) or backgrounded (as in Callon 1984) in the argument and evidence.

Samantha Hurn distinguishes between 'anthrozoology' – which retains an anthropocentric focus consistent with the discipline of anthropology, and 'human-animal studies' - which 'places all of the research subjects on a level playing field' (2010:27-8). Following this terminology, the methodology for this thesis is anthrozoological, in that it is ultimately a study of how *people* make sense of equestrian relationships. It is not the 'multispecies ethnography' Alan Smart defines as observing the way that; 'interactions between different non-human species are not necessarily mediated (only) through their interaction with humans' (2014:3-4). While of course I do acknowledge that horses relate to one another without human mediation (for example), these are not the dynamics I have focussed on here; the human is the lynchpin of this account. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, I agree with Matthew Watson's sharp critique (2016) of multispecies anthropologists' narrations of animals, which are often thick in particular political and aesthetic symbolism that is not necessarily shared by the human or nonhuman research participants, nor acknowledged explicitly and reflexively by the anthropologist. He argues, 'We have adopted animals as mythemes. The pawns, knights and rooks are crows, elephants and meerkats. They're easy pieces to play with. They've long performed mythological roles, and they rarely talk back to their handlers.' (2016:162). He doesn't argue that we should remove such 'mythology' from our thinking, but that we should pause to think about what sorts of philosophy holds the current 'onto-epistemological privilege' (2016:167), and to recognise the human 'theatre' within apparently non-representational, posthuman arguments. His concern is the political coherence of these accounts, particularly their (lack of) ability to answer geo-political environmental concerns from a considered and responsible perspective (see also Hornorg 2017). My concern is similar, in that too prominent and confident a description of animal being can

flatten the epistemological, political and ethical problem that non-humans (ontologically) bring to the table.

In legitimising anthropological observations of animals, multispecies ethnographers often argue for the personhood of the non-human animals they study. However, such person-like status is well established for horses in the equestrian realm I studied, the thorny question is not *whether* we should observe them as persons at all, but rather, how not to misrepresent the types of person-like beings they really are; this is a politics of voice (Hurn 2012:203). It is because they *are* something *like* human persons that I (and my friends) are concerned with their (mis)representation. In many ways, I have treated horses just as I would treat any group of non-verbal persons who are controlled and spoken for by another group, such that I cannot ask them directly to confirm their sentiments in words. I tread with care, moderating, editing and considering each word I utter on their behalf, however familiar, congenial, fulfilling and spontaneously immanent my experience with them may have felt. This is a factor of my background, I have seen what looked like sheer terror in a horse I was told was 'just playing', and I have been unsettled by others' descriptions of apparent 'learned helplessness' in a horse I felt was so *obviously* 'happy in his work' (as I described it then). Therefore, while fieldwork involved a 'passionate immersion in the lives of the non-humans being studied' Tsing (2011:19), I have not been so bold as to advance my own best-knowledge as an adequate substitute for horses' experiences. Remember, I could sell you any horse. I am cautious with my words, I am trying to be gentle.

This leads to my second consideration; my relationship to my participants' perspectives, which, as the thesis describes, are contested and often changing. The more detail I add to horses' behaviour, the more certain it is that I will have alienated at least some of the participants who shared their experiences in good faith, rendering their perception a projection onto my reality. I was staggered by the diversity in the way equine behaviour was interpreted. Only very basic elements are uncontentious. Participants would agree, for example, that a particular horse was behaving in a 'high energy' way, but not on whether this was excitement, anger, anxiety, remembered fear, pain, a 'busy' temperament and so on. They would agree that he bucked, but not whether he leapt, exploded, chucked her off, gave a dirty look, flinched, stomped, sprung, plotted, surprised himself or mucked about. I could have taken the interpretation of the participant directly involved in each

situation – the rider bucked off, for example - though her narrative would likely change on each recounting, and all such narratives are made with the (defensive or receptive) awareness that there *could* have been another telling. I could have given my own detailed description, allowing the other stories to triangulate from there, perhaps even charting the way others' descriptions sometimes challenged my own sensibilities. This is similar to a technique many multispecies authors use. Bringing the animal in often involves bringing the author in more too – but perhaps pushing the other human people out (e.g. Hayward 2010, and see Watson 2016). However, this is not the method I chose, as so complex and ongoing are my own ruminations on these subjects that I feared an autoethnography would become too navel-gazing. This would document my own process of handling knowledge about horses, but not attend adequately to the way knowledge about horses is performed as a problem and managed through observable human-horse-human relationships.

Observations of horses do feature in this thesis. However, I have preferred *not to* explicitly work out in detail how to describe equine minds or personalities. The horses are outlined and introduced, rather than theatrically depicted or rigorously interrogated. This leaves the horses - I hope - present, subjective, active, somehow familiar and yet also interesting, under-defined, enigmatic and elusive. 'The elephant in the room' is that thing that nobody talks about, despite the fact it is *right there.* In almost symmetrical contrast 'the horse in the data' is the subject everybody talks about, yet it is *not* rendered entirely present, visible and tangible. I recognise this is a departure from current methodological trends, but it is a deliberate one. In the end, I feel this approach follows the advocacy of the animal turn to be experimental, tentative, and flexible in recognising how our relations with animals are part of what constitutes us as human: ‘There is hope that these alternative perspectives of what it means to be human will inform a new ethics of living in the world. To do so, multispecies ethnography must continue to reveal attachments to other species and things that make us 'think, feel and hesitate''(Ogden, Hall and Tanita 2013:7). It has been an ethical, methodological, and personal experiment for me *not* to describe horses in detail in these encounters, to 'think, feel and hesitate', and to leave the matter open, not pinned down, unresolved between the lines uttered by my participants and me. If it leaves the reader eager to know the horses better, I am content. This is my best effort at keeping 'polite distance' (Vinciane Despret’s term, 2013:65). Nonetheless, I believe the thesis communicates something substantive of what these horses, as well as

these humans, are all about.

Chapter One: Horsiness – born and chosen

Introduction

This chapter sets out to describe the classed and gendered context of British horse riding, and particularly to show the landscape in which a sense of epistemological responsibility emerges. The demographic of equestrian pursuits has changed significantly over the last few decades. In the early 20th century, the typical participant in equestrian sport was male, high-born, and high-ranking within the military (Crossman and Walsh 2011, Hedenborg and Hedenborg White 2012, 2013). Now, the typical figure is a middle-class woman, for whom horse riding is much more than a sport, horsiness is understood as a constitutive part of an individuals' true nature. What is more, contemporary horsemanship foregrounds the development of an accomplished and fulfilling relationship with ones' horse. The broadening participation demographic, and a growing consumer market of options, has an unsettling effect upon traditionalist equestrian styles and sensibilities, leading to a contested field in which horse owners must decide how best to pursue an authentic and legitimate personal connection with their horses.

In this chapter I make regular comparisons with Rebecca Cassidy's ethnography of horse racing society in Newmarket (2002). Cassidy describes a British equestrian context in which a stable class and gender hierarchy is maintained through the central idiom of breeding and heritage. In this environment, 'lads' (stable workers), jockeys, trainers and horses are organised within an infrastructure which, for the most part, runs 'like clockwork' (2002:18). This provides a wonderful juxtaposition to my ethnography of British amateur horse riders. My participants had little involvement or interest in the racing world Cassidy describes, but the patriarchal, hierarchical structure of heritage that Cassidy evokes are relevant to the traditionalist associations of professional equestrianism (instructors, professional competitors, judges, vets) that my participants did interact with, as this chapter will show. In contrast to this traditionalist equestrianism, I will describe the individualisation and responsibilisation of my participants as 'postplural', in Marilyn Strathern's terms (1992:135-7). This refers to a destabilisation of taken-for-granted 'natural' connectivity between people, as a consequence of increased focus on individual choice.

In Section One, I will introduce the horse riders who populate my ethnography, through attending to their life stories and describing the typical horse show and 'livery yard' (where horses are kept). In this section, I examine the exclusivity of the communities I studied compared to Cassidy's racing world. I utilise my participants' life stories to investigate the distinctiveness of the term 'horsey' – which participants use to differentiate themselves from their 'non-horsey' friends and families. I find my participants emphasise their own choice and commitment, but also ground their sense of belonging in the idiom of a giveness and essentialism to their 'horsey' natures. In the second section, I investigate how horsey women manage lives that move in and out of this exclusive horse world. I show that the idea of horsiness affords women opportunities to both reject *and* reinscribe the essentialism of broader societal gender norms and expectations. While Sections One and Two deal with the distinction between horsey and non-horsey people, in Section Three, I investigate the distinctions that are made between different horsey individuals *within* the horse world. I explain that while class elitism has been challenged by the broadening demographic, judginess about equestrian competence sometimes re-evokes judgements of classiness during horsey people's evaluations of one anothers' horsemanship. This is particularly the case with regards to distinctions made between a traditionalist style and newer, more fashionable alternatives. Finally, I reflect on the awkward relationship between the notions of choice and nature, through dialogue with Marilyn Strathern's description of 'postplural nostalgia'. I describe a superfluence of choice available to British horse owners, which is met with both enthusiasm and anxiety. Their challenge is that they must each choose how to make a good connection with their own horse, while also acting under a broader British scepticism about the poor capacity of choice to forge *real* relatedness.

The new horsey set

British equestrian history

Midday, midsummer in middle England. The big back field at Paddock Farm is usually used for making hay, but today, it is teeming with horses and riders, because Paddock Farm is hosting a regional riding club show. There must be close to sixty horses on site, with more arriving all the time, lorries and trailers joining the rows of parked vehicles, horses stomping and whinnying, eager to be unloaded. The air smells of cut grass and

manure, and the horses smell of tea-tree and citronella, a futile attempt to keep the horse flies at bay. Five temporary roped rings are set up, three dressage[2], two show jumping[3], each of which hosts a continuous flow of horses and riders valiantly giving their best efforts at the tests prescribed. A steward operates the gate of each ring, briskly organising the next competitor to be ready, ticking off entry numbers on a clipboard, and shouting "best of luck!" at the incomers. Two collecting rings, one with two practice jumps, one 'flat', contain a frenzy of horses and riders warming up and preparing to enter the competition ring. There's a shoal-like current to the way horses move in relation to one another, because there are rules in place to prevent collision - as at all horse shows. These rules are known by all competitors, occasionally enforced with a tut and a head shake, not formally declared or marked anywhere on site. They include: only jump with the red-flagged wing to your right, slower horses stick to the rail, and always pass oncoming horses left hand to left hand. Many riders can happily recount that the latter is a hallmark of equestrian military heritage; the sword (right) hand is kept a trusting and mannerly distance away. Some competitors have brought their instructors, or experienced friends, as support, who bark a few words of encouragement in the collecting ring. "Kick like hell into the double, don't let him look at it or you'll get in too deep!" they might say. Outside the rings, movement is more stagnated. Those who are yet to compete attempt to soothe fresh, bright eyed, fidgety horses. Some riders mentally rehearse the course, tracing the pattern they will ride with the tip of their whip drawing in the air. Riders wear tweed or navy jackets, beige jodhpurs, polished long boots, leather gloves, crisp shirts and ties or stocks. Horses are plaited up, hooves oiled, saddlery polished. One lithe black horse wears a red ribbon in his tail, a sign to other competitors that he is known to kick. Those who are happy with their completed rounds have discarded their jackets, kicked their feet out of their stirrups and loosened their ties, and sit on top of their sweaty horses, eating ice cream, and watching their friends attempts. Others head smartly back to the privacy of the lorry for a rigorous analysis of what went wrong. Along the hedge line, there is a secretary's tent set up, where competitors can enter classes, receive their number, and find

[2]An Olympic sport with military heritage, now available at a range of levels 'affiliated' to British Dressage or 'unaffiliated' and run more informally. Dressage demonstrates control, cooperation and communication, horse and rider complete set patterns of movements known as 'tests' and receive a mark out of ten for each movement. The higher levels involve impressive degree of precision, balance and strength from horse and rider.

[3]An Olympic sport in which horse and rider set out to clear a course of knock-down show jumps, quickest clear round wins. Riders can compete at shows affiliated to British Show jumping with the highest level at 1m40, or at unaffiliated events, where the lowest classes are 50cm.

out their placings; and a judge's tent, where volunteers are preparing a ploughman's lunch and white wine for the (volunteer) judges, though it looks like lunch will be late. A loudspeaker hums with updates; some cracking rounds have been jumped so competition is tight, there has been a horse loose in the lorry parking, a terrier has been found and not claimed, and someone has had a fall in the show jumping ring. I hear along the grapevine it's Sarah come off Benji again, she just won't accept he is too much horse for her, I am told.

There is something quintessentially British, and somehow almost timeless, about this scene (lorries and ice creams aside). Show days conjure a compound of images in the British imaginary that resonate with period TV dramas like Downton Abbey. The horse show is a 'story seed' (Carrithers 2009:40-49) which speaks of village fetes and fairs, picnic lunches, well-ordered efforts of community spirit, trophies and tweeds. An atmosphere of both warmth and respectability accompanies the idyll of rural leisure pursuits, and to some extent, today's equestrians seem eager to animate and embody that imaginary.

British equestrian sport has a long historical association with the military elite and gentleman amateur, which is best documented in relation to horse racing and breeding (Longrigg 1972, Vamplew 1976). The format of non-racing contemporary British equestrian sports (dressage, show jumping and cross country[4]) originated in cavalry training exercises and military parade manoeuvres, developing through engagement with the Olympic games during the first half of the twentieth century (De Haan and Dumbell 2016). During this same period, the working roles of horses, in agriculture and transport, increasingly diminished[5] such that by 1960, the government all but gave up its interest in monitoring the horse population as an economic resource and asset (Crossman and Walsh 2011). In 1947, the British Horse Society was founded, and soon began developing a formal education programme for grooms and riding instructors (BHS website, 2015). At the 1952 Olympics participation in equestrian events was opened up to include non-military competitors, and also women (Hedenborg and Hedenborg White 2012:305,)

[4]Horse and rider gallop across the countryside over a set course, jumping 'solid obstacles' such as ditches, walls, banks. This is one of three phases included in the Olympic sport of 'eventing' (along with dressage and show jumping).

[5]from over 1.1 million agricultural horses in 1915 to a negligible number in 1960

(though some upper-class women had been taking part in less formal competitions, hunting, showing and breeding, for much longer Munkwitz 2012). These milestones illustrate that the mid-century marks the beginning of a significant change in the role of the horse, as equestrianism flourished during the growth of the sports, leisure and rural pursuits markets, (as well as a continuous increase in pet ownership) through late capitalism (Franklin 1999, Dashper 2014, Crossman and Walsh 2011, Hedenborg and Hedenborg White 2012). Horse riding became more affordable as a diverse market of equestrian services and goods expanded. The uptake of horse riding by those who didn't own their own land provided an alternative income stream for farmers who converted land and barns into DIY (do it yourself) livery yards, such that in the early 2000's, the government (DEFRA) regained an interest in the horse population as an important aspect of agricultural economic health (Crossman and Walsh 2011:100).

Broadening participation in equestrian sport

Despite the increasingly broad demographic taking up horsey pursuits, equestrianism has to some extent retained an association with upper class exclusivity, a point which irked many of my participants, whose work mates considered their hobby a sign of some hidden wealth or posh breeding. '*Bring on the dancing horses*!' reported the (non-equestrian) press during the 2012 London Olympics, articulating a dominant discourse among non-horsey folk, that riding is the folly for an old-moneyed upper class (Fletcher and Dashper 2013). Some parts of the equestrian world earn the classed reputation more than others (we will visit the racing world via Rebecca Cassidy, and Pony Club elite, via Joanna Latimer, shortly). However, a closer look at the show day's multispecies participants will show that this is not the elitist horsemanship of old. There are not only plenty of labradors, spaniels and terriers on site (as might be expected of the Pony Club community Latimer describes, 2009), but Chihuahuas, French Bulldogs, and Cockerpoos too. These are associated with new money, celebrity glamour (Redmalm 2010) and/or suburban comfort; in short, these are towny dogs. There also are spotty horses, patchy horses, retired and rejected racehorses, hairy cobs, and shiny warmbloods intermingling (we will revisit these breeds in more detail shortly). All and sundry queue to eat at the burger van (judges excluded) and try to prevent ketchup splodges staining tweed jackets – be they inherited, made to measure, budget make, or borrowed just for the morning.

Let’s zoom in on one of the show day participants. Layla, a twenty-four-year-old part

time receptionist, begrudges having to remove her nose ring as she prepares to compete. Not because she doesn't value the traditionalist aesthetic of competition dress, in fact, I came to know her as one of the strictest sticklers for 'correct' detail in that regard. It's just that the piercing is only just healing up and it hurts to put it back in. She wrestles her thick hair into a hair net. It is at least three shades of pink. The dye is fading too quickly, Layla says. Layla is getting ready to ride Twiggy, a bay mare of mixed breeding, technically shared with Layla's mum, because she couldn't afford to buy her alone. This is a fact Layla likes to forget. So too, is the fact she currently pays rent on her childhood room at her mum's house. She and her mother are probably too similar, she says, they fight too often. She'd like to move out, but the money all goes on the horse (and the nightlife). Layla is fiercely independent and self-willed when it comes to her horsey pursuits. She had wanted to work in horses, at a stud, but she didn't finish the college course, she tells me, it was 'shit, a waste of money,' and the lecturers knew less than she did. And she doesn't want to 'just be a groom'. Layla is often first at the yard (5.30 am) to ride before work, she is always working towards some competition goal, and she is stoic in insisting that the rather less motivated Twiggy can, and will, eventually win some rosettes.

As we await Layla's allocated dressage time, I ask about Twiggy’s breeding. Twiggy is part thoroughbred (the racing breed at the heart of Rebecca Cassidy's ethnography). Layla thinks Twiggy clearly doesn’t know about her 'posh side'. On the other side of her breeding (so says her passport[6]), is a spotted appaloosa horse from North America called 'I Love Willie.' This is a source of much hilarity to everybody within earshot. The odd name opens up speculation, no-one can fathom why Twiggy was bred, 'An appaloosa cross thoroughbred, what was the point?' Layla wonders (pre-empting my interest in the structural and ethical import of human choices in relation to nature, which will be re-examined throughout).

Even though Layla is younger than the majority of horse owners at her livery yard (one 22, others 32-65, average 42), she is invested in the yard community, maintaining several

[6]A legality since 2005 that all horses carry a passport, to prevent them entering the human food chain while medicated (Crossman and Walsh 2011:106). This is an unspoken ugly truth about the precarity of horses' roles as family member or sporting partner, 'problem' or 'unsound' horses can quickly lose value, while some declare 'a horse is for life', generally speaking, horses are sold on much more regularly than dogs or cats, and can even find their way, via horse dealers, from pet to plate.

cross generational friendships. She often helps others with their horses when they are short of time. In return, they fondly tut and sit her down with sweetened coffee, when she turns up to do morning chores on a come-down after a heavy night out, not having yet been to bed. Horsiness, for Layla, is everything. When I began my fieldwork, Layla was going through a horse-less period, and she was often to be found hanging around the yard, mucking out others' stables, cleaning tack, and offering to ride any horses whose owners were on holiday or busy. Without a horse, she told me, she felt useless. She'd wake up at 5 in the morning with no reason to get up. A show would be coming up and she had no horse to get fit. When Layla bought Twiggy, she was visibly energised and fulfilled. “Now I can get back to being the real me” she announced while giving Twiggy a vigorous brush.

Paddock Farm and livery options

Layla keeps Twiggy at Paddock Farm (henceforth PF), the show venue. It is an old dairy farm, occupying 27 acres divided into grazing paddocks, with stabling for 25 horses, a tack and feed room (the old milking parlour), outdoor riding arena, and a 3-bedroom 1960s built brick cottage. As is fairly common for a livery yard, it is rented (in this case, from the council) by a 'horsey' yard manager, 37-year-old Bertie Morris, who lives on site with his 'horsey' wife Jill. Jill works full time as a director of a large business in London, but also acts as the chair for the local Riding Club[7]. Bertie feels lucky to be able to do what he loves for a living, ever-pursuing his dream of competing at top level. Cheaply bred horses and working-class riders *have* made it to the Olympics, he reminds me. Though he clearly only has so much faith in that sentiment; all of Jill and Bertie's savings are currently tied up in Ada, an £18,000, 5-year-old steel grey sports horse who might just 'go all the way'. She is clearly talented, the apple of Bertie's eye, and a near-celebrity among Bertie's liveries and students, but Ada occasionally point-blank refuses to jump. Bertie makes ends meet by running the livery business, teaching riding, 'schooling'[8] horses on behalf of their owners, and buying and selling horses occasionally too.

Livery here costs £160 a month, including hay and straw. More expensive livery yards

[7]Riding Clubs are staffed by volunteers and usually affiliated to the British Horse Society, who quotes 33,000 riding club members (BHS 2017) They run clinics, talks, and competitions, and compete against other riding clubs in team competitions.

[8]The term 'schooling' refers to training under saddle, in the arena, in order to perfect the horses' responses to the ridden 'aids' or commands.

might offer an indoor arena, competitions and visiting trainers on site, a cross country course of solid jumps to train over (£350 a month), and 'full livery' options, where one’s horse is cared for by yard staff so that the owner is not bound by daily horse care duties (£580 a month). Cheaper livery yards were available, run by a farmer with little interest in equestrianism, where owners might get less support, but on the other hand, feel more independent and less bound by the manager's rules and opinions (£85 a month). Cheaper still, one can rent an odd bit of grazing with no facilities and perhaps no good off-road riding, there is just such a field at the edge of PF's nearest village, with three young shire horses in it (£65 per month per horse). On the other side of the village is a river bank on which eight traveller’s ponies are tethered, which is the source of much concern among Paddock Farm-ers. Travellers and toffs were on the horizons of my participants’ equestrian lives, geographically and figuratively. One of my participants had 'rescued' (bought) a pony from the travellers, and other horses with unknown histories were presumed to have come from travellers if they seemed afraid of people. At the other end of the scale, 'posh' equestrians were occasionally the butt of jokes for being laa-di-daa and not part of the real horsey world, too spoilt to spend the time forging a real connection with their horses. In one instance, a horse was sold to 'toffs' who were mocked after visiting to view the horse, but in the end it was decided he had really 'landed on his feet' with 'the posh, hunting lot.'

PF is a buzz of activity between 6-8am, and 4-9pm, as people fit stable chores and riding around work. Five cats live on site (three pets, two mousers) and three dogs (labrador, collie, cockerpoo), and many of the liveries bring their dogs with them, in every shape and size. There are also two lots of chickens, one group owned by Bertie (all named after famous riders), one lot owned by a livery, Roxy (just called 'the girls'). PF liveries lived within a 25-minute drive and had other livery yard options available to them within that radius which was not unusual. Equine population distribution is spread fairly evenly across southern and midland counties[9] (Boden et al 2012). PF liveries held a broad spectrum of employment statuses; full time, part time, self-employed, unemployed, bed and breakfast owner, publishing agent, nursery staff. Three worked 'in horses'; a freelance groom who provided holiday care services, a self-employed equine

[9]In making this assertion I am omitting the population hotspots associated with racing towns Newmarket and Lambourn, and on the outskirts of London providing for horse owners who live within the city.

physiotherapist, and a part time riding instructor for a local riding school.

As the employment types of Paddock Farm liveries suggest, the socioeconomic demographic of equestrian sport is now spread fairly evenly, The British Equestrian Trade association reported that in 2006, 36% of participators in equestrian sport belong to NRS socioeconomic category AB (upper-middle/middle class), 29% BC (middle/lower middle-class) and 36% C2DE (skilled working/non-working class) (BETA 2011) [10] 98% of horse riders are white (according to Sport England 2011), and none of my participants were anything but. As we shall see, there are a multitude of options and styles of horsemanship available for different tastes and budgets. There are 2.7 million regular riders in the UK, and between them, they spend £4.3 billion across a range of equestrian services and consumer goods (BETA 2015). 74% of riders are female – with higher proportions of men taking part in the top levels of competition and the most prestigious employment (international judges, celebrity status riders, managerial roles within the various sporting and welfare organisations, company CEOs) (BETA 2015, see Hedenborg and Hedenborg White 2012, Plymoth 2012, Dashper 2013). Among my research participants, mostly local level competitors, the female proportion was much higher than the national average.

Horse riding, from the birds-eye perspective of statistics, could be seen as just another incidence of late-modern growth in consumerism and leisure spending (Giddens 1991: throughout, e.g. 80-85, Harvey 2007, Horne 2005:119-130). Equestrianism could appear like any other sport or hobby, one among many choices available to the 'expanding middle classes' (Biressi and Nunn 2013:77-78) in terms of how to spend (and make) their money, and a feminized option at that. However, this perspective grates with the meaning that 'horsiness' holds for my participants' sense of identity and belonging. Horsiness is figured not as a lifestyle choice, or aesthetic preference, or historical trend, but as part of an individual’s true nature or even soul. Horsiness differentiates one individual from her family and friends, distinguishes her from the rest of her gender, and therefore somewhat separates her from the 'non-horsey' world. This figuring of horsiness as individualised distinction can be seen in the life stories of horse riders, particularly when compared to

[10] NRS social grades are sorted by occupation of the chief income earner of the household. A: upper middle-class, Higher managerial administrative or professional, B:middle class intermediate managerial, administrative or professional, C1:lower middle class, supervisory or clerical, C2: skilled working class: skilled manual workers, D:working class, semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers, E: not working.

the form of inherited equestrianism that Rebecca Cassidy describes (2002).

Who belongs in horsey worlds?

The members of Cassidy's racing world are largely born into their racing life. This is true of those at the top of a clearly organised hierarchy (owners, bloodstock agents, breeders, trainers) and those at the bottom (jockeys, apprentices, stable lads and stud hands) (2002:31-49). Lads, owners and trainers alike take the idea of heritage very seriously, in terms of the noble bloodlines of the horses they race and also in terms of the inherited nature of one's affinity for racing. As racing people like to repeat, 'blood will tell' (2002:140). The focus on pedigree as a significant way of differentiating types and qualities (of people or horse) contributes to the perpetuation of exclusivity of the racing world as a whole, and also to the apparent naturalness of distinctions between types of individual within it (2002:140-161). Young, lightweight boys grow up hoping to follow in their jockey father's footsteps (2002:39). They, like the trainers and owners, also valued the feeling of having insider knowledge, belonging to an exclusive world, and potentially being connected to the next big winner (2002:120-124). The idea of 'belonging' within the racing world is undergirded by one's connection to winners, reflecting success and competence in whatever role one plays in relation to a winning racehorse – buying it, training it, riding it, caring for it. However, it isn't competence that Cassidy identifies as the central idiom around which Newmarket belonging revolves, but pedigree (2002:31, 140-155). This is because pedigree is called upon (and creatively interpreted) to *explain* competence or success, it is seen as the *natural facts*, and therefore, the explanatory principle behind the differentiation of winners from losers, in life as in racing (2002:33). While racing can be seen as a celebration of the extent to which 'man' can cultivate nature through the breeding, producing and training of horses, it is the idiom of an unyielding nature -in blood - which underpins racing folks' hierarchical organisation and exclusive sense of belonging.

In contrast, a common life story told by Paddock Farm riders involved coming from an un-horsey family and yet feeling obsessed with horses and striving for access to them since a young age. Key features in this narrative are the hopelessness of the parent's lack of equestrian knowledge or engagement, the burning need, hunger, and love for horses that eats up the poor child (who is reflected upon, in hindsight, with both sympathy and pride), and the gumption she plucks up in getting access to horses in one way or another.

Variants included; 'Sitting and watching seaside donkey rides for hours on end and then asking if I could lead the donkeys since I couldn't afford to ride them and that was the nearest I could get to a horse', and, 'Standing on the footpath near a riding school so that I could just smell and hear the ponies until eventually the owner let me help with the mucking out.' Stories told by those whose un-horsey parents lamented and bought them a pony carry similar hallmarks of the useless, humorous ineptness of the parents, and the child answering her equestrian calling, perhaps somewhat haphazardly at the beginning, but nonetheless bravely and with growing responsibility and skill. In spite of the frequency of these narratives, they are always told as though they are one-offs, as though *this* child (now adult) was *particularly* imbued with horsiness and prepared to act on it, swimming against the current where necessary to realise her unique equestrian potential and to satiate her true nature. These horsey life stories are also often coming of age stories, about realising independence and one's own control over destiny. These ideas of young women’s empowerment through equestrian endeavours constitute a familiar narrative within British literature. Victorian heroines evade romantic suitors by literally galloping away on horseback, while in more modern 'pony girl' books young women outride egotistical boys, displaying physical strength and bravery in buckets, and seek solace from the dramas of teenage life in the heartiness of the barn (Cunningham 1996, Singleton 2013).

Three Paddock Farm-ers had horsey parents, including Bertie, (PF tenant manager), his mother, Gail, a riding instructor herself, was one of his liveries. As we discussed the roots of their horsiness, these born-and-bred equestrians clearly harboured suspicion regarding the genetic factor. This lay not only in the difficulty of distinguishing nature from nurture, but also the underlying feeling that they would have been horsey wherever and to whomever they were born. Genetic links to horsemen in previous generations (I was told of a cavalryman and barge worker) were generally speculative and made lightly, compared to the centrality of pedigree for Cassidy. More central elements in the stories of equestrians like Bertie were their unique relationships with particular horses, the ups and downs of their developing competitive lives, and the influential (sometimes terrifying) instructors and bosses they were able to learn from and apprentice under.

Joanne Latimer describes what she calls the 'Anglo-Irish' equestrian culture as rooted within a rural elite and its apparently natural affinity with the countryside landscape

(Latimer and Birke 2009:6, 11-14). Children learn to ride at the same time as learning how to belong to this exclusive community through institutions like The Pony Club. This observation would appear to be true in my field site too - to a degree - if the comments of my participators are anything to go by. They, like Latimer, *recognise* the way skills are absorbed from a young age as 'experience' which enables some people to be more 'natural' around horses, more knowledgeable regarding equestrian culture, as well as more well connected within horsey communities, than others. They are critically attuned, we might say, to a Bourdieusian sense of habitus (Bourdieu 1987). Those with access to these pedagogical worlds reflect on it and consider themselves lucky. Bertie told me,

> Pony club was sometimes brutal, but growing up in that world, absorbing it all, means that now, you don't even remember where you learnt most of it. You can't even remember not knowing how tight a throat latch should be, or how to bandage properly. It only stands out to you when you realise all these adults who have ridden for years and somehow don't know the most basic things. That's the luxury of growing up in that world. You can't – well it's really hard to – get on so well when you've come from the outside.
>
> From field notes, August 2016

Those without insider access at the right time can reflect that their performance and success doesn't fully reflect their innate capacity, since their equestrian potential was stunted. Who knows what they could have achieved were they born to a horsey family? As Jess told me:

> I wasn't a Pony club girl. I had to make do and figure it out myself. I had a little bugger of a first pony, I fell off him more than I stayed on I think, but I loved him so much, we got that bond, eventually I got the hang of him and nobody else could ride him like I could. But I had to put him out on loan to go to university. Working in horses just wasn't an option for me. So, then you pick it up again once you can afford to, so then I am basically still trying to catch up on everything I want to learn...You look at Emily King [daughter of famous eventer, coming into her own as international competitor herself] and you think, she's had it all right there, of course she was going to be good. She was practically born onto a horse. The rest of us have to do what we can with what we have and try not to compare yourself too much to the Emily Kings, just try to get as good as you can for your horse and for yourself.
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> Dictaphone recording, August 2016.

In Section Three, and Chapter Two, we will revisit Jess's predicament; the classed assumption that she must go to university rather than work in horses renders her a perpetual amateur and relative novice. For now, however, Jess's narrative evidences horsiness as an individualised quality and personal endeavour. The project Jess describes, 'To get as good as you can for you and your horse' indexes a typical programme of self-

improvement, focussed on developing the relationship with one's horse (often measured in part, through competitive successes). The amateur horse riders I studied were continually engaged in projects of self-development and improvement, and keen to tell you about them through discussion of their current endeavours, future aims and evidenced improvements. This reflects a broader contemporary (and arguably middle class) British affiliation with notions of ambition and meritocracy (Littler 2013). Riders were likely to introduce themselves to one another through reference to a narrative of progress and improvement, regardless of the standard they ride at (e.g. I'm Rosie, my horse is George, a warmblood, we event and we are working towards competeing at BE90 level....).

<u>Horsiness 'in the bones'</u>

Ideas about the 'horsiness' of individuals present within these equestrian life stories could destabilise the naturalisation of classism present in Cassidy's Newmarket and traditionalist equestrianism more broadly. When Cassidy's informants state 'racing is in the blood' (2002:116), they suggest it comes through individuals, but from a lineage before them. When my participants told me 'horses are in my bones' or 'I'm horsey to the core' they meant it was fundamental to who they were as individuals, not as new formations of pre-existing substance. This is evident in the way Leanne told me, "Horses is [sic] who I am. It's just me. I don't know where it came from, no-one I knew growing up was horsey. But I always have been sort of drawn to them, and only happy when horses are in my life. I don't know what I would do if I didn't have them, I literally don't know what I'd do." (Field Notes, September 2016)

This unique individual being is understood to be further shaped and enhanced, but not entirely re-made, by experiences – hence the suggestion that the same individual might in theory have been born to horsey-er parents, changing her accomplishments, but not her unique nature. The part-replaceability is important. It means there is nothing natural about which individuals are born to which opportunities – it *could* have been Jess in Emily King's shoes, Emily and Jess are considered not qualitatively different in nature – each of them *similarly unique*, and each of them similarly exemplifying the horsey disposition.

Finally, in true meritocratic style (Biressi and Nunn 2013:60-62), it is understood that one can maximise on the horsey affinity one has been given through personal endeavour, and eagerness to get at the right experiences. This means individual nature is a potential – to

be achieved, recognised, or stunted through self-application, rather than a pre-given birth right. Taken together, this gives those born to horsey families no real *right* to greater horsey success than those born to non-horsey families, despite the recognised fact that they might actually demonstrate greater success, or greater 'horsiness'. In other words, there is nothing 'natural' about the difference between Pony Club kids and those looking over the fence, it is a similarly unique horsiness and ability to work hard that they both share (and these are considered the important elements), and 'only' luck and opportunities which differ. Natural affinity (talent) and choice (endeavour) are the moral trump cards, even where money and inherited networks clearly play a part in success. This is almost the direct opposite to Cassidy's case, wherein success is explained as based in the natural facts of pedigree even where a pattern between family line and racing success is *hard* to establish. Relatives could be ignored where racing success was unforthcoming, and links could be exaggerated or emphasised with periphery relations who are connected to winners (2002:33).

To conclude this section, it seems as though a broadening equestrian demographic destabilises a more traditional, naturalised exclusivity replacing the logic of class and breeding with the celebration of individual endeavour. However, we also find the idiom of 'natural belonging' reinstated, not through inheritance, but in the uniqueness of individual constitution. This individualism was not complete atomisation or personal detachment; 'horseiness' provides its bearers with an inbuilt, naturalised, 'real' capacity for a particular form of relatedness (with horses). Horsey individuals speak about themselves almost like a jigsaw piece, always gravitating toward an equine connection to complete the form. They are always already bound for a highly specific sort of absorbing relatedness that simply *must* be pursued. This was more than a mere whim or hobby, riders were keen to attest. Horsiness was in their soul. Choice is, paradoxically, valued ('I made it on my own') and de-valued (against a real, natural, essential affinity) simultaneously within these life stories. My participants' life stories served to introduce my participants to me as people who felt distinctive in that they were *bound* towards equine connectivity, but also personally responsible for making that happen.

Horsey girls, not girly girls; owning the capacity to care

The figure of the jigsaw-piece horse-person introduces the *relational* aspect of

horsemanship in my field site, which is particularly important to the ways in which gender is experienced. Since my participants moved in and out of the exclusive horse world in order to interact with non-horsey families and working lives, horsiness provided women with the means to reconsider the importance of personal choice, or essentialised nature, in their experience of gender.

Tough hands and the wrong shaped bottoms: Essentialism and individualism.

Cassidy's Newmarket offers a model for the sort of patriarchal structure that the horsey women I met rejected explicitly and indignantly. In Cassidy's Newmarket, men are considered more suitable jockeys due to their strength and body shape (2002:23), more successful at the networking side of elite racing life since 'men communicate better with men' (2002:36-38), and more likely to place serious bets, while a £2 'ladies bet' is just a bit of fun (2002:78). Imaginings of equine pedigree are strongly patrilineal, in that a mare is considered 'empty' until she is in foal (while a stallion is always complete), and then the speed of the foal is thought to come more directly from the stallion than the mare (2002:135, 149). There are startling similarities in the way horse racing human's pedigrees are traced. A handful of famous 'insider' Newmarket surnames are invariably related to the successful racing exploits of generations of men (2002:32). Trainers' wives described their role in life as the support and complement to the male trainer’s racing pursuits: hosting owners, providing food, perhaps exercising racehorses also. As one trainer’s wife put it: “My role is to look over the stable door and say, Ahhh” (2002:38). The idea that women are naturally inclined to nurture and care for others was used to explain the higher proportion of women employed in the stable lad’s role rather than higher up the racing hierarchy (2002:37). Since the lad’s work is stigmatised in the racing world as the bottom of the pile - the behind the scenes, mundane, machinery that keeps the front-of-house prestigious racing and breeding activities afloat, the naturalisation of women as carers is part of the ideology of male dominance and supremacy (for another example of patriarchal essentialisms in a British equestrian setting see Hurn 2008 on Welsh cobs).

The horsey women I got to know would hate to be considered the victims of such gendered presumptions. They considered themselves tougher, more resilient, independent and less image obsessed than non-horsey women, who they called 'normal girls' or 'girly girls'. The way horsey women describe their relationship with horses, it was decidedly *not*

about playing second fiddle to fathers, brothers or husbands, but pursuing one's own dream, with guts and determination. What is more, horsemanship requires physical strength and bravery. Note, the term horse-*man*-ship, denotes a fundamental masculinity to equestrianism which horsey women were proud to possess (comparable in some ways to the masculine concept of 'Brotherhood' pursued by the female Brotherhood of Freemason Sisters, Mahmud 2014:93). Horsey women lift hay bales, fix fencing, and get rope burns never mind wrestling with the notorious wilfulness of their mounts (more in later chapters). Female bodies are considered to hold the potential for physical capability, as seen in the formal gender equality within equestrianism, it is the only sport in which men and women compete on equal footing in the Olympics (and throughout lower levels too) (Hedenborg and Hedenborg White 2012, Hedenborg 2015).

My participants enjoyed a relative relaxation of body image and promotion of a pragmatic relationship with the body when they were around their horses (Birke and Brandt 2009, Dashper 2012, 2013). Leigh would arrive dressed in a skirt suit and office shoes at the end of the working day, totter across the yard hastily, disappear into her horse's stable for a few moments and emerge in wellington boots, jodhpurs and a waterproof jacket, visibly more relaxed and somehow unfurled, occupying space in a more loose and ungainly way, sometimes even giving a stretch or a sigh, or exclaiming cheerily: "Right, now I've got that lot off, tell me how your jumping went yesterday while we get some hay!" or similar. This relaxation of appearance management was described by participants to being able to 'take off' a mask and just 'be the real me'. The relationship with the horse was considered particularly 'real' for the fact that (as Layla told me): "Horses don't care about hair do's or high heels."

To some extent, then, the horsey relationship enables women to feel as though they can defy essentialised gender norms (though see Birke and Brandt 2009, Daspher 2012 on feminization and aestheticization within equestrian sport). However, I found that the much-celebrated freedom to escape feminine norms through horses was established by foregrounding the *individual's* capacity to choose, rather than in a substantive resistance against such normativity itself. This can be seen, for example, in the mocking of 'girly girls' look-ish ways, and (more later) the distaste for 'PTA[11] mums' obsessions with their

[11]Parents and Teachers Association. The phrase 'PTA mum' indexed a particularly involved, doting,

role as child carer. Both examples figure 'other women' (Scharff 2016:52-64) who have not made empowered choices, and who are subsumed by their gender rather than acting as real individuals. Both Angela McRobbie (2009) and Christina Scharff (2016) describe similar dynamics of among young British women, whose rhetoric of individualisation has disbanded the notion of unified feminist revolt. In my case, horsey women in fact did not reject, but *embraced* aspects of the association between women and care, opting in *and out* of its usual formulation, reconstructing care as brave, public, and accomplished, and injecting the concept of care with an aura of self-willed autonomy, choice and empowerment.

At PF, horse care activities are centre stage, and women's essentialised capacity to nurture and form feeling connections were considered to make them more likely than men to belong here as relevant and worthy individuals with 'real' horsey status. In this context, horse care enjoys the status of a central element of a *chosen* and therefore valued (rather than enforced, background or essential) pursuit. Each owner cared for the horse that they rode, owned, and trained. This structural individualism related to a close dyadic relationship between particular horses and their people. Individualised horse care usually involved twice daily visits to the yard in order to feed the horse, clean the stable, change its rugs, put it out/bring it in from the field, exercise it, groom it, provide fresh water and hay. Rarely did I hear anybody complain about the work. In fact, they seemed to relish it. Being positive, efficient and pragmatic about physical discomfort is part of a typically equestrian outlook. Horse care is valued, apparently intrinsically, both in terms of providing good quality, rigorous care that is aesthetically pleasing to the care provider, and as the chance to develop a real connection and bond with the horse through the intimacy of daily nurture and the familiarity that entails. Those who needed to employ help with these chores sometimes bemoaned not being able to complete them personally. There is a public and outward-facing element to equestrian care chores. A common way to compliment another livery is to comment on how well cared for her horse is: 'Doesn't he look well, he has really muscled up!' or 'Gosh, what are you feeding him? His coat is fantastic!'

The valorisation of care is related to an exclusion of men, who are considered naturally ill

responsible mother.

equipped for it. Despite their pride in 'toughness' and the underlying masculinity associated with horsemanship, PFers felt it was obvious and unremarkable that horsemanship was predominantly female, seeing it as an oddity that it had previously been a masculine pursuit in Britain or was commonly male dominated in other countries. Jo suggested this may have been because these historical or cultural others pursued dominating or mechanical relationships with horses rather than 'real' connections, Rochelle and Layla agreed. And as for their lack of prevalence in my field site: “Men aren't very good at taking responsibility for another living being, are they?” Rochelle told me. “They'd rather do golf or ride motorbikes or something that doesn't involve a relationship. They haven't got the tact for it.” Reasons for men's lack of propensity for riding referred to their lack of relational skills, empathy, or 'feel' for another living being.

Good horsemanship was something people took pride in as a natural virtuousness associated with being a good human too: tactful, empowered, autonomous, yet communicative. This was distinguished from faults considered to be an excess of gender in *either* direction. Good horsemanship was neither too girly, emotional and soft, nor too tough, egotistical and unfeeling. This seems, again, comparable to the Freemason Sisters' pursuit of 'fraternity' as the (always inherently gendered, classed) 'attempt to forge a universalistic relationship above and beyond the constraints of specific, gendered bodies' (2014:93). The comparable point is that both groups hold the idea that overly gendered bodies shouldn't get in the way of the meeting of real individual (horse and human) souls, even as they also hold gendered ideas about what constitutes that 'neutral' utopian meeting. However, in my ethnography, it was considered more likely that (some) women could 'toughen up' to the naturalised virtuous ideals of horsemanship, than it was thought likely that men could, or would, 'soften up' to them.

Some linked this to male bodies. Leanne told me most men simply never look right on a horse, and horses just don't take to them. 'It's because their hands are too stiff, they have no feel in them. The horses hate it,' Katie suggested, while Leanne giggled something about their penises getting in the way of a decent riding position (mirroring a remarkably similar comment about women's 'wrong shaped' bottoms among Cassidy's racing folk 2002:36). This body essentialism was not exclusive to considerations of gender, while ethnicity rarely emerged as a conversation topic due to the complete ethnic homogeneity of horse riders, I was shocked on one occasion when participants explained to me that,

'Black people can't ride well because they have heavy bones', and 'They have different skin which smells bad to horses.'

While my participants recognised that there were some remarkably talented individual men (like Bertie), the average man seemed awkward, laughable, and unwelcome in the predominantly tough-female equine spaces that I studied. Visiting husbands, fathers, boyfriends, or brothers' ineptness was often mocked. It was a matter of minor but regular frustration for my participants that the non-horsey world considered riding to be a girly pastime. While the view from the inside was that the average man was not good enough (at skilful relationships) to ride, the irksome view from the outside was that the average man didn't ride because horses were not good enough *for him* (too girly, silly, emotional, soft). Therefore, although horsey women celebrate their own capacity to overcome normalised expectations of their gender through individualised capacity to choose otherwise, they also reinscribe essentialised gender norms in many ways, not least through asserting their own distinction from 'normal' girly girls and 'normal' (empathy-lacking) men.

Moving between worlds: creating optionality.

The different expectations of the female body inside, and outside, the horse world, provided opportunities and challenges to those moving between the two spheres. Some spoke of embarrassment at going to work with 'hat hair' after riding in the morning. Several Paddock Farmers had their nails painted in strong, dark colours in order to hide the grease that somehow got stubbornly embedded right under the finger nails. A few months into my fieldwork, a news story hit the headlines in which a shopper was thrown out of a large supermarket because she was wearing wellington boots and had been to see her horse, which was considered unhygienic by the management. Paddock Farm-er's response to this was varied, Leigh said she would have been mortified with embarrassment and always, "Put on normal clothes to go to normal places," while pink-haired Layla refuted, "Sod them. A little bit of mud never hurt anyone. Why should they dictate what you can wear?" In either case, it is evident that moving in and out of the horse world provided an opportunity for reflection on the normativity itself, and therefore provided (required) choice at each entry/exit point. As Marilyn Strathern explains, when normative behaviour becomes explicitly recognised as such, it also becomes optional and loses any naturalisation as taken-for-granted (1992:e.g.47).

However, while Strathern largely associates growing optionality and explicitness of norms with potential instability and anxiety, for some Paddock Farm-ers, it also seemed to provide opportunity for freedom and the sense of a core self that can 'do' more than one sort of 'real'. The act of transformation itself was empowering for some women, not only in 'taking off' a high maintenance look and relaxing, but also in 'dressing up', both for parties and nights out with horsey friends, and for equestrian competition. I helped Liz prepare for a competition: she put on makeup that she declared, “Subtle, but strong and sophisticated,” (mascara, eye liner, deep red lipstick), wore simple diamond stud ear rings, threaded her diamanté belt onto her beige jodhpurs, gave her boots a final shine and put on her show jacket (that she had saved up for and had fitted). “It's about saying to the judge: ‘Hello, look at me and my beautiful horse. We take ourselves seriously, we are poised and professional...look how well we have got our shit together!’” She explained. Similarly, I had a feeling that while Leigh liked getting out of her work clothing, she also quite liked being seen in it first – showing her horsey friends that she had another side, owning her right to both sets of ideals. When the Christmas yard night out came around (a 3-course meal and disco at a local hotel, which escalated into something like a screeching hen-do), she went all out, buying a black floor length, low cut, sparkly evening dress, getting her hair died, a fake tan, a new set of nails. The transformation procedure (rather than only the result) was recorded on Facebook, and as I talked her through her dress-choosing dilemmas weeks in advance of the event, it became clear that she really hoped to surprise her horsey friends to show that she could be powerfully sexy and fashionable just as she could be powerfully tough, relaxed and physically strong in jodhpurs.

In some ways, the exclusivity of equestrianism bought women independence not only in the way they dressed, but also in the way they spent time and money. Rochelle is one of the PF liveries who didn't have employment. Her youngest (of 4) children was 14, and Rochelle had never worked since she and her husband had got together when she was 16, shortly after she left school. He preferred it that way, she said, so that she could take care of the house and children, and she was fine with it, it gave her lots of time to ride in the day as well as complete her family jobs. Rochelle had no access to a bank account – her husband took care of, 'All the paperwork and money and post and things,' she told me, which is why she particularly appreciated being able to do 'odd jobs' at the yard. This involved clearing muck from the fields, fetching horses in and out, and cleaning tack, for

which she was paid a few pound coins at a time here and there. Her husband had no idea about this money, she told me, scandalously, so she could just spend it straight back on the horses (she had 2) and he would never know. She bought them food treats, sparkly headcollars, or paid for riding lessons with this secret cash. Casual horsey work moved Rochelle from the 'at-risk girl' Anita Harris describes as haunting a contemporary moral imaginary (with early motherhood, lack of career) towards the counter-category, 'can-do girl' (the capacity to invent the self, plan a career, succeed, and display a consumer lifestyle) (2004:13-47). Rochelle’s case might be considered an outlier, since her financial dependence was considered worrying by other liveries, but the pattern of earning small amounts of cash through horsey chores without the knowledge of other family members (or the tax man) was fairly prevalent. And freedom in the way money was spent was also granted due to the exclusivity (and secrecy) of the horse world. For example, when buying a saddle (worth £1100), Jess explained to me that her husband wouldn't like how much she had spent, but she could 'fiddle it about a bit' by inventing an extra farrier and vet visit, as he didn't know what was needed.

Legitimising horse time through the concept of nature

Horsiness presented tensions as well as opportunities within family life, which was most striking where horse riders had young children. Leigh was out competing her horse or taking him to training clinics almost every weekend and riding every evening after work. She was unstoppable in her (relatively low level) competitive ambitions, measuring herself keenly against close peers and past performances and industriously plotting improvements. Sometimes, she brought 7-year-old Emma along with her, and Emma sat in the car on her phone, or played with the yard dogs and cats, until Leigh was ready to go home. Mostly, during Leigh's horse time, Emma was at home with her husband or with Leigh’s mum. “I'm not one of those women who has a child and then gives everything up to run around to PTA meetings!” Leigh proclaimed when I asked whether Emma liked coming to the yard. “Like it or lump it, that's the way it has to be sometimes so she'd better get used to it!” That horsey women might prioritise caring for their horse over their human dependents was something of a stereotype and even a joke. 'I better get home before he divorces me/before my poor neglected kids forget what I look like/I suppose I ought to do at least a bit of parenting this weekend,' were common ways of recognising the felt potential criticism - that one's family commitment was lacking. A popular satirical theme in images shared on Facebook compared horsey women’s care for the family with

care for the horse. While family home is filthy, stable is sparkling clean, while family eat fast food, horse eats organic wholesome meals lovingly prepared, while children's hair is unbrushed, horse is gleaming and so on.

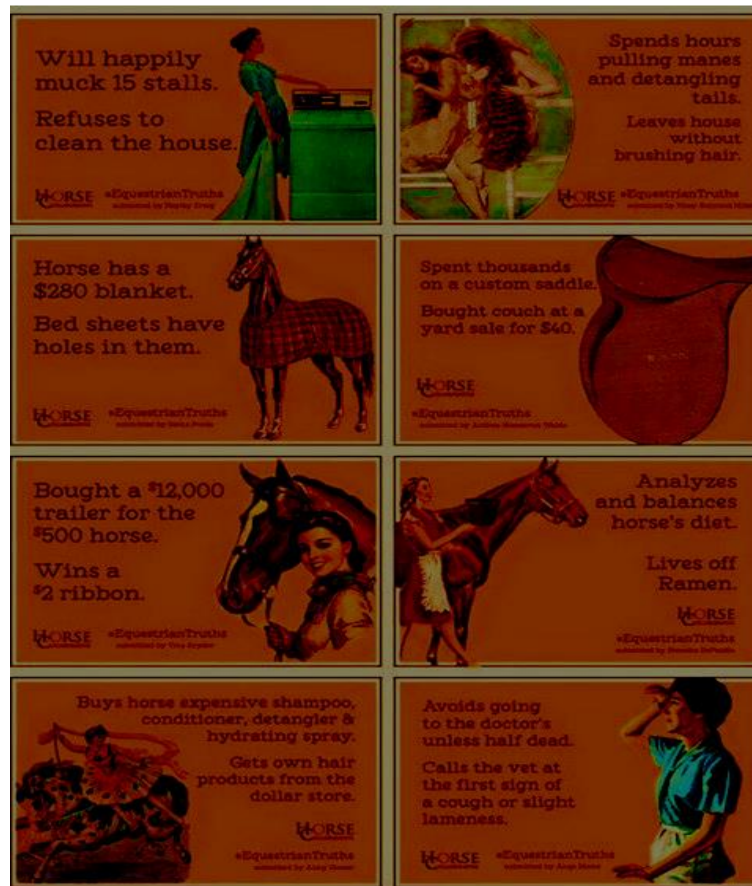

Illustration 1: An image shared on facebook depicting the irony in womens' care for horses

The irony reflects an interesting juxtaposition that women's independence (escape or neglect) from family responsibilities comes not in the form of rejecting the position as naturalised carer whole heartedly, but in offering that care in an alternate direction. In some senses, equestrianism gives women an enhanced capacity for choice, in terms of how they spend their money and time, how they relate to their body, and who they choose to care for. However, horsey women seem to need to defend this turf, and the strategies they use suggest that the legitimacy of their *choice* to ride is fragile - they utilise the bolstering capacities of the idiom of nature. For example, the real, natural, needs of the horse can be used as the trump card in rationalising commitment from the owner. Hence, Leigh said to me, “Nothing comes before my horse, he gets what he needs first, and then the rest is up for discussion. Ultimately, he’s only a horse, and he is waiting for me to get

here, and no-one can explain to him why I am late. If my husband has to make his own breakfast, so be it." Species difference – particularly non-human vulnerability versus human responsibility, is employed here to render Leigh's prioritisation of horse over family a fact-based inevitability.

Another naturalisation holds that since it is in the true nature of horsey woman to spend time with horses (the born jigsaw piece equestrian), any stunting of that is a curtailing of who she really is, a form of violence to her core self. Hence, Leigh asserted later in the same conversation, "Horse time is *me* time... I've always said, if anyone tells me, 'It's me or the horse,' then they know where the door is." Equestrianism is often talked about as a bug, obsession, addiction, need or hunger - note the *lack of choice* presumed in all of these terms, the assertion is that horse riding simply *has to happen*.

In some ways, horsemanship has the potential to provide the answer to the dilemma of the woman who is supposed to have it all: a serious competitor, self-made, but in line with true nature, who can provide valued care, but in a brave, tough way, and who is be able to connect through the body beneath the artificiality of make-up, yet also able to employ appearance management masterfully and selectively. Most significantly, horsemanship provides women with the opportunity to articulate individualised choice and endeavour *through* (not versus) the notion of a deep relationality in which one might feel really connected and complete. The capacity to care, communicate and connect is reformed as an individualised self-realisation which partially detaches and liberates women from their human dependents. However, this capacity for potential empowerment relies, as we have seen, on a flexible and fragile employment of the notion of choice. Horsiness is empowering to the extent that it legitimises women as individual choosers, distinct from their non-horsey peers and families, a unique brand of can-do girls, who can choose how – and for whom- they do care. Yet horsiness is itself legitimised through the idea that it is more substantial, more real, more natural and more compelling than if it were only mere hobby or choice. The legitimacy of the concept of choice itself is both valorised and undermined by these negotiations of horsiness in relation to non-horsey expectations.

Class, competence and style.

Individualised choice versus natural types

Having discussed the ambiguous employment of 'nature' and 'choice' in distinguishing horsey people from non-horsey people, I move on now to consider distinctions that horsey people make amongst themselves. In Cassidy's racing world, the predominant differences between *types* of racing folk are class differences; marked out, performed, and re-inscribed through different sorts of tastes that are associated with different typical body types as well as through the structural organisation of the racing yard (2002:20-30). Jockeys are the most striking example of the way a body type relates to a particular position within the hierarchy of racing. Small, muscular, and tough, jockeys are regularly dieting, eating salads, high protein health foods, and soups (2002:23). In contrast, trainers tend to be tall, dressed to demonstrate affluence and success (whether by opting for an eccentric style or adopting traditional dress to the highest standard), with petite wives who wear well fitting, expensive jeans (2002:28). They fill the freezer with luxury foods ready to entertain owners at a moment's notice, extravagant desserts, smoked salmon and so on. There are other sorts of differentiation at work too. Both horses' and lads' affiliations to particular trainers is identifiable on the heath since both wear clothing (exercise rugs, coloured bandages, riders' jackets) that follows the trainer's colour scheme, sometimes with embroidery carrying the trainer's monogram (2002:26). At the racecourse, jockeys wear silks in the colours of their mounts' owners.

Things couldn't be more different for Paddock Farm-ers. As an optional activity, the horse world is organised around providing for the variant needs and wants of horse owners, who are relatively free from structural affiliations to others. This leads to a heterogeneous equestrian community, which is to some extent fragmented into sub communities, styles, and sorts, based on the activities, ethics and aesthetics the owner pursues. Riders can choose their 'discipline' (sport, e.g. dressage or show jumping), competition classes/levels (a constant renegotiation, based on current performance, waxing or waning of ambition) and affiliations/memberships to various societies, riding clubs, or breed associations. Furthermore, British horse riders have at their fingertips a burgeoning market for consumer goods. Shopping for the horse is clearly an integral part of enjoying the horse-human relationship for many Paddock Farm-ers, reflecting a broader late modern pattern of performing affectionate relatedness through consumption (with pets, Holbrook and

Woodside 2008; with families, Carrier 2005, Miller, Jackson, Thrift, Holbrook and Rowlands 1998). 'Your Horse Live,' an annual equestrian exposition, boasts 'amazing shopping opportunities' as one of its main draws. I visited with Paddock Farm-ers, and it didn't disappoint, with three huge exhibition hangers, carpeted in the shocking pink that brands the event, full of trade stand after trade stand of feeds, vitamin supplements, sparkly whips, shampoos, riding clothing, horse rugs, saddle cloths, first aid kits, hay nets, tack soaps, and even high price items like horse trailers.

At first glance this dazzling array of choice seems likely to suggest a dissolution of class in the sense that Cassidy found it: distinguished body types and tastes in line with socio-economic capital and labour type. Rather, the leisure horse world demonstrates the rise of individual choice (Giddens 1991, Strathern 1992) and seems to distinguish people based on personal style. When choosing a horse, a livery yard, or a sporting aim, equestrians try to work out where they 'belong', 'fit' or 'click'.

Mary told me about her choice to pursue Western Riding with her horse Molly. Both Mary and Molly were gentle, thoughtful, soft, and steady types – but not pushovers, quietly determined. For two years, Mary tried to get Molly going better for competitive dressage and show jumping. Molly didn't seem to enjoy the big, fast movements – the expressive, flashy trot required for dressage caused particular problems, Molly 'held back' (and so did Mary, as she was told by her instructor). On a recommendation, Mary had a 'Western' (North American, cowboy style) riding lesson, and it was revelatory. The movements were softer and slower, but not less skilled, ridden to a high degree of precision, but with the emphasis on the lightness of touch. Mary and Molly excelled, and found they got on fantastically with the whole Western community. "It was like finding my tribe!" she told me, dressed head to toe in cowboy style (jeans, shirt, hat). The quest to find the place one really belongs was based on the assumption that there was a naturalness to one's individual, horsey disposition and that there were others that at least somewhat shared it.

An ethic of 'each to their own' permeates the shared landscape of the livery yard in which individuals endeavour to do horsemanship to the best of their own, personal, capacities and tastes. To some extent, the moral high ground is won by tolerating difference, showing open mindedness and respecting others' rights to do things their own way.

Lorraine told me of how it became awkward when a new riding friend tried to share tips on how to achieve a type of riding Lorraine didn't care for. Eventually, Lorraine had to tell her, 'Look, Di. You ride your horse, and I'll ride mine,' and apparently the relationship continued amicably from this point on. However, the concept of 'each to their own' in practice, was not always a leveller, but often a system of distancing and sometimes excluding.

Reconfiguring natural types

Stereotypes were common ways of articulating 'types' and sorting individuals in the horse world. These stereotypes seem to be useful in marking out categories of person as natural types, at the same time as using irony to acknowledge the non-conformity of individual uniqueness. All Paddock Farm-ers could easily run off a list of stereotypes of rider based on the sport they pursue or the breed they ride. But all also explained how they, or someone they knew well, as really *individual* individuals, somehow bucked the trend, too. Putting people in boxes was as much fun as remarking on how the boxes were insufficient. Many, at least sometimes, bought into their stereotypes with good humour. Dressage 'divas' were thought to be perfectionists, strict, Germanic, sticklers for detail and perhaps a little prissy (Diamanté studded hoody reads, “*Stress*age Queen”). Showjumpers were thought to enjoy a good party, have a rather large ego, more likely male and working class, and to be particularly flirtatious, perhaps even sexually provocative (women’s fitted T shirt reads, “Showjumpers know how to give a good ride”). Eventers were thought of as brave, perhaps to a point of madness, forthright, no-nonsense types, quite possibly posh or traditionalist, but full of guts and grit and good humour (notably less sloganned merchandise targeted at eventers, who tend to prefer the quality-understated look, though a lunch cooler reads, “Eventers keep calm and canter on”). Paddock farmers were almost all eventers, or at least, aspiring eventers, owing largely to the fact this was Bertie and Jill's passion. They had either selected Paddock Farm because of the eventing link, knowing it would have their type of people on site, or they had 'got into' eventing because the general rhythms and chatter of the yard compelled them towards joining the trend (whereby some found themselves better 'fitting' than others).

Similarly, breeds present further grounds for stereotypes, and again, the emphasis of stereotypes is disposition and personality. The coloured cob is thought of an ideal horse for the novice or nervous, dependable, friendly, uncomplicated. However, they can be

known as 'pikey ponies' and considered cheap and common. Welfare charities describe them as the 'problem breed' – filling rescue centres like 'the staffie of the horse world' (WHW conference 2016). Cob owners are at pains to insist they are more sensitive, able and complex than their stereotype suggests. Thoroughbreds are considered 'sharp' – intelligent, highly responsive and quick on their feet. They can be found at all levels of society; their British-ness and racing association buy them access to an old-moneyed hunting, shooting association, while on the other hand, the mass of cheap, retired and failed racehorses makes them an affordable 'project' for those with high ambitions and low resources. Warmbloods are designed for expressive paces and maximum jumping potential. They are the sports car of the horse world and can be thought of as too athletic for their own good, quite possibly unintelligent ("dum-bloods") or over-reactive, associated with top competitors, as well as those with an inflated sense of their own abilities, and too much money, lower down the competence hierarchy. There are clearly moral judgements within these typologies, with classist tones. A mis-match between horse and rider is often recognised by commentators as an embarrassing if not irresponsible problem, caused by the owner's lack of self-awareness, such that "she ought to have a cob" is akin to the statement, "she doesn't know her place."

Judgements and snobbery

A hallmark of recent interest in class is the recognition of complex, changing and contested moral and aesthetic judgements, whereby 'class' groups are not established as a static social fact linked to inheritance, so much as 'classiness' can be identified as a form of 'judginess' employed in various ways (Lawler 2005, Skeggs and Loveday 2012, Cannandine 2000, Biressi and Nunn 2013, Sayer 2002, 2005). As is already emerging within the ethnography, competence level in some ways supplants, or supports, 'classiness', as a naturalised way of sorting people into a hierarchy of worth and influence.

A particularly clear example of classiness/competence in the horsey world is the distinction between traditionalist styles and newer alternatives. A 'traditional' aesthetic includes brown leather tack on the horse, and navy or brown clothing predominantly for the rider. Traditionally kept horses' manes are 'pulled' short and plaited for competitions, and they come into the stable frequently, particularly in the winter. In contrast, more 'natural' alternatives involve leaving the horse in the field more often, leaving the mane and tail long and untrimmed, and perhaps even leaving the feet unshod (Hurn 2011).

Furthermore, one is also able to reject traditionalism and choose a nylon pink or green bridle for one’s horse, a diamanté or coloured 'blingy' crystal browband, and even a zebra-striped turn out rug. A growing trend is to dress horse and human 'matchy matchy,' which involves colour co-ordinating bits of both rider and horses' clothing to match. Along these lines, jackets and saddle cloths that were embroidered with the name of the owner/rider and the show name[12] of the horse were also popular. Note the way this dress system makes explicit that *this* horse and *this* rider belong to one another. In comparison, traditional dress communicates one's belonging to the more elitist horse world of old, and recall Cassidy's ethnography, where horse/rider dress colours communicate one's belonging to a trainer’s string or a particular owner.

Traditionalist horse people often showed disgust at the newer styles available, while, on the contrary, matchy matchy riders felt traditional approaches were snobby and dogmatic. Bertie, quite literally, turned his nose up whenever a livery accrued an item of questionable taste (neoprene gloves rather than leather, Velcro fastenings rather than buckles, and so on) and regularly enjoyed telling me the history and details of various traditional dress codes and rules (which determine who/when one should wear stock or tie, tweed or navy jacket, colour of breeches, and so on). These were explained through pointing out failures among (he presumed) ignorant or lazy competitors in collecting rings. For Bertie, acknowledging custom closely was a sign of respect – to the horse (who is not just a play-thing – he emphasised), to the judge, to his own past mentors, and to equestrianism as a whole. I spoke with Bertie about his dislike of the newer styles and his preference to adhere to traditional standards: “To be honest, it’s more classy,” he explained, “It’s probably just snobbery really, isn't it? But it [newer styles] is more like, Essex, like, fake stick on nails, isn't it?” I asked him whether he felt there was a pattern between particular classes and the way they dressed themselves and their horses. I knew Bertie wouldn't consider himself as coming from an upper-class background, so was intrigued by his use of the term 'classy'. “You don't have to be high class to be classy,” he replied. A link between competence and snobbery is evident in that professional horsepeople – often from working class backgrounds – were likely to be the strictest defenders of traditional, equestrian standards of 'classiness'.

[12]Most horses have 'stable names' such as 'Bobby' and 'show names' – the names in their passport used for competition, such as 'Bobby Dazzler'.

Professionalism and competence snobbery

The area's most proficient riders and prolific instructors hold minor celebrity status. Many amateur equestrians admire and respect professionals, even when they don't all follow the traditionalist styles associated with professionalism. Like Bertie, professional riders have often apprenticed for long, successful stints under better-known competitors, developed strong equestrian networks, and learned the required embodied habitus for moving and working in and around horses and equestrian environments. This often includes a sharp understanding of obedience, hierarchy, and respect. These working equestrians have found success through developing a high regard for correct detail, hard work, and deference, and they expect the same from others. The professional groom and particularly the accomplished rider are liable (but not guaranteed) to be invested in the traditionalist (some would say) 'snobby' horsemanship as part of their figuring of real horsey belonging.

Whether working class or middle class (and that distinction is not so easily made, Edwards, Evans and Smith 2012), my participants who rode and cared for their own horses, just for fun, at times felt excluded from, or belittled by, the '*really* horsey' communities of professionals. Jess raised this predicament, towards the start of this chapter; working in horses wasn't an option for her, horsiness had to be chosen as a consumer good. In line with career aspirations associated with her middle class background, she 'had' to go to university, rendering her forever inside-outside the truly 'experienced' horsey set who lived their vocation. The figure of the Essex girl looms large, as Bertie exemplified in his above critique. Biressi and Nunn demonstrate a British disgust at 'Essex girl's' out of control consumption practices (2013:20, 24, 40-41). 'Essex girl' is brazen and self-entitled, she does not know her place and lacks any class, they describe. Among traditionalist equestrians, the distaste of over-consumption spreads also towards condemning the more moneyed, middle class yummy-mummy type who (the critique goes) spoils her far-too-for-her-good horse, while togged up in rural fashion brands. The prevalent distaste for spoiled women resonates with what Catherine Gray (2000) calls 'Barbie-bashing,' disgust generated towards bourgeois women who are deemed as having too much choice, and too little grounding in reality. My participants were keen to distance themselves from this potential critique, sometimes by identifying others who better deserved it. "All the gear, but no idea" was a phrase I heard repeatedly,

for example, it was whispered about a lady at a competition, when, next to her huge, brand new, top of the range horse lorry, she struggled to get her smart horse to stand still so she could get on board. Both Bourgeois Barbie and Essex Girl are evoked by distaste for those who have all the wrong sorts of capital: too much consumer choice, and no authentic equestrian talent or connection. In this discourse, traditionalism features not as merely *another* choice, but as the opposite of overrun choice, as an anti-fashion (Goodrum and Hunt 2011)

Marilyn Strathern shows that while the rubric of 'choice' has been differently constructed by the English historically, the idea has consistently been associated not only with opportunity, invention and enterprise, but also with anxieties about openness, variety and fragmentation (1992:10-14). Choice, she argues, appears a particularly precarious way of connecting people when held in comparison with the (variable) English conception of 'nature' as grounded, established, given and real (1992: e.g. 56, 87). Once a plurality of traditional or natural 'styles' have been explicitly rendered as optional, Strathern argues, nothing grounds those choices as substantial or binding, and this superfluence of choice is recognised by society, felt as a fragmentation and dissolution of community (1992: e.g. 43, 163-4, 183, 224) which Strathern calls a 'postplural nostalgia' (1992:32).

In line with Strathern's predictions, among my participants *too much* choice was considered incompatible with substantial relatedness. An unease about consumerism, choice and invention preoccupied the equestrian world. It was common for riders aged anything over 25 to reminisce about a time when equipment was more rudimentary, but horsemanship more skilled, and also somehow also more authentic. A general consensus was that there were too many opinions in the horse world, or at least, that the large number of opinions was incompatible with a smoothly functioning community: there was too much critique, contestation, judginess and even bullying. Bertie told me, “Bitchiness is a [common] problem on yards when there is a vacuum of proper knowledge, so everybody thinks their own way is the right way.” Bertie’s comment shows that a multitude of personal opinions become moralised judgements precisely because equestrian relationships are *not* considered merely matters of choice, wherein any choice might be equitable and valid. Rather, these relationships are treated as though there *is* a natural reality to them that ought to be properly attended and recognised, such that doing horsemanship well, is not just a matter of doing it differently in any manner one chooses.

Who is world-making?

One could speak of a competence snobbery in which amateurs feel awkward and out of place in the horse world, despite their majority in numbers. However, this trend is revealed at the same time as it is under challenge. Take, for example, the Wobbleberry challenge. In 2009 British Eventing introduced a lower level class, the BE80T (80cm jumps, T for 'training' level), which aimed to make affiliated competition accessible to almost any horse and rider with the right preparation. This followed a pattern over the last two decades of gradually lowering the entry standard. There are no pre-requisites to entry (other than purchasing day, year, or life BE membership) but some worried they were not of a good enough standard to 'go affiliated' and would be humiliated, outclassed and unwelcome on the day. The 'Wobbleberry Challenge' seemed to answer to this feeling, by giving those who felt they were not-quite-appropriate a legitimate reason to compete. The idea was that middle aged, out-of-shape, nervous, or novice riders (the anti-thesis of 'real' horsemanship by eventing standards) would be sponsored by friends and family to train towards and then compete at an affiliated event, earning the sponsorship money for a cancer charity on completion. The Wobbleberry trend grew quickly. Wobbleberries supported one another via Facebook, wrote Wobbleberry blogs, and had wristbands and a mascot horse soft toy 'Wilberry' which some carried around the course with them by taping it to their wrist or shoulder, shattering the traditionalist aesthetic that is usually sustained in affiliated eventing. The self-mockery involved in being a self-confessed 'Wobbleberry' makes visible the competence snobbery that the movement helps to overcome. Needless to say, it wasn't met by support from everybody. The two participants who have featured prominently in this chapter, Leigh and Layla reported their inaugural Wobbleberry day as a success because 'they made it round', and therefore had established a baseline affiliated performance to improve on, and earned belonging to an exclusive set of 'affiliated eventers'. But Tina, an ex-top competitor who ran the venue, reported that it was her worst day of eventing, ever. She told me that competitors fell off, didn't know the rules, kept losing their way on course, wore the wrong clothing, and threw the schedule of the day into chaos by taking three times the optimum time to complete the course. 'Not everybody *should* event. Period.' She vented.

Joanne Latimer and Rolland Munro (2015:415) describe class dynamics as the 'battle over world-making' (using Bourdieu's phrase, 1989). They ask, whose values determine

legitimate personhood? The above described challenges to, and defences of, traditionalist aesthetics suggest to me the horse-world is mid-battle, world-making is all to play for. While the majority of equestrians *are* amateurs and relative novices by competition standards (even if they have ridden their whole life), amateurism sits awkwardly within the horse world, and the average equestrian is looking up, yearning to be a little more of a 'real' horse-person than they currently are. A classist landscape endures, all be it destabilised and reconfigured in certain ways when compared to the centrality of blood and breeding in Cassidy's work. It is interesting that Bertie holds the position as yard snob, even though he is employed by those who were apparently (and somewhat regretfully) too good for horsey work. One-horse owners are in danger of appearing too spoiled, too superficial, too inexperienced to be considered really horsey folk. Nonetheless, the market is responding to the hordes of amateur horse riders and their profitable desires to perfect their individualised relationships with their horses and work towards their competition goals. The wobbleberries are world-making.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that contemporary horsemanship is a heterogeneous landscape, populated increasingly by amateur, female, one horse owners who particularly focus on relationship development with the horse. I have shown that horsiness provides individuals with a way to belong to a community that feels somewhat detached from the rest of their world. Horsiness marks some women out as distinct from their family and the rest of their gender, yet it also sets them up as 'jigsaw piece' equestrians, deeply invested in relatedness with another being. I have described horsey people as ambitious, tough and committed, and I have introduced the horse world as a potentially empowering site of personal choice, but highly fragmented, exclusive and fraught with judgements. The scope of variety and choice, and the destabilisation of traditional systems, leads to ongoing evaluations of legitimacy and 'real horsiness'. Throughout, I have demonstrated an awkward and imperative relationship between the concepts of choice and nature, which, in various forms, often form the basis for my participants' understandings of belonging, identity, and connectivity. There are many, often valorised, opportunities for choice - whether to spend time with family or horse, which horse to buy, where to keep it, how to dress it, train it, and compete it. Yet the moralised judgements about these choices often refer to a grounding in nature – to the concept of the raw, real, established and given

– how one ought to behave, who deserves to belong, what real horsemanship properly consists of, and, as we shall see in the proceeding chapters, what counts as a real connection. An 'epistemological responsibility' emerges out of this individualised responsibility, desire for close connectivity, and destabilisation of traditional knowledge. Each owner felt an imperative to know their horse well, and as we shall see, to know themselves well too, in order to pursue an authentic and legitimate connection to the horse.

Good relatedness is what my participants' horsemanship is all about. The stakes of good decision making are fraught because they are considered more substantive than mere matters of style. With decisions of feed, medication, work regime, training approach, saddle fit, grass management, and more, the horse’s (and rider’s) health, welfare and potential to succeed all hang in the balance. These matters are met, increasingly, with differences of opinion. No longer able to rely on taken-for-granted systems, it is the horse owner's prerogative to resource and choose from the available options. While the premise is that each individual *must* decide for themselves what they feel good horsemanship is (cf. Giddens, Beck and Lash 1994:187), at the same time, the implication is that they cannot *just decide* what good horsemanship is according to their own whim and fanc

Chapter Two: The revolution in horsemanship and the imperative to be open minded

Introduction

In Chapter One I noted the import of positive horse-human relationship to my participants. I also described a challenge to traditionalist styles and systems, and a context in which individual owners held responsibility for making good choices on behalf of their (equally individual) horses. In this chapter, I build on these topics by investigating a rift between two systems of training the horse, known as 'traditional' and 'alternative'. The 'alternative' movement has been described as a 'revolution' in horsemanship (Miller and Lamb 2005), alluding to the explicit contrast with 'traditional' horse training that alternative practitioners invoke. The conflict between these systems engenders an environment of critique, but also an ethic of 'open-mindedness'. This chapter sets out to interrogate that ethic of open-mindedness, investigating exactly what sorts of 'openness' equestrians value and how they put open-mindedness into practice when interacting with horses and with one another. As an initial introduction to the ethic of open-mindedness, Jodi, an alternative horsemanship instructor describes:

> You have to keep looking outside, you have to be open to seeing it another way, keeping a clear picture on it, learning from *real* horsemen, even the ones who don't know they are real horsemen and aren't necessarily making a big fuss about it. Just watch their horses. The horses will tell you what's right and what's not, if you are ready to learn it.
>
> Dictaphone recording, October 2016.

Jodi was talking to me about following Pat Parelli, Californian horse whisperer, and explaining why she didn't blindly accept everything her role model said, after all, “The most important thing he has taught me is to think for myself,” she pointed out. Jodi's advice points towards two aspects of the equestrian ethic of open-mindedness: the ability to hold a critical stance (thinking from the “outside”, as she puts it), and the ability to allow the horse to change and adjust one’s mindset (learning from the horse). I will investigate these two aspects through comparing the open-mindedness evidenced in my ethnography with two other sorts of 'open'; 'critical openings' described within ethnographic studies of queer activism (Dave 2011, 2012, Heywood 2018, also Povinelli

2012); and the (variable) affective 'open' of mutuality, permeability, and possibility described within multispecies literature (Game 2001, Haraway 2003, 2008, Ingold 2006, 2008, Kohn 2013, Locke 2017).

My aim is first to describe how traditional equestrianism is portrayed within the discourse of alternative trainers and their followers. I will show that there are some clear similarities between the multispecies version of open and the alternative equestrians' valorisation of open-mindedness, particularly in the injunction to make oneself 'open' to learn from the animal by recognising the embodied, affective relatedness between horse and human. In both multispecies literature and alternative training rhetoric, openness is also constituted as a freeing of minds and an eschewing of other, more 'closed' epistemological systems. The multispecies literature I engage with defines 'openness' in opposition to scientific objectivity, scepticism and abstraction. In comparison, in the second section of the chapter, I draw on Naisargi Dave's use of Foucault, for whom critical 'openings' are defined in opposition to the 'enclosures' of normativity, recognisability and legitimacy. Dave's terminology is particularly useful for describing the formality and fixity of alternative pedagogical systems, wherein attempts to revolutionise end up creating new 'closed' normativities. This is recognised by critics of the alternative movement, who feel it invokes 'cultishness' in humans and programmatic 'dead-eyed' over-obedience in horses. In the third section I show that my participants' ethical practices demonstrated frequent and constant management of both critical openings and objectifying closures. Finally, I will compare the three forms of 'open' described throughout the chapter, and I will argue that the multispecies version of 'openness' cannot account for my participants' practices of 'open-mindedness.' Multispecies ethnographers are preoccupied with the difference between objective, detached, 'closed' ways of knowing animals on the one hand, and relational, affective and 'open' alternatives on the other. On the contrary, equestrians are invested in open-mindedness as a means of obtaining right, true, accurate and therefore ethical knowledge about what *sort* of subjective creature each horse, in each moment, is.

The revolution as an opening of minds

The contemporary horse world has been described as undergoing a 'revolution' (Miller

and Lamb 2005). Miller and Lamb use the term to describe a 'radical' multi-faceted, global change in the ways in which people relate to their horses. Originating largely from North America (two key proponents from California) and gaining increasing acclaim - and causing particular friction - in Britain since the 1980s, 'revolutionaries' explicitly position themselves as challenging old, traditional, harsh ways of interacting with horses, and introducing new, kinder methods, many of which draw on ethological or behavioural ideas about horses' instincts, and 'natural' communicative, social or learning capacities. Sociologist Linda Birke has studied the uptake of the revolution (which she calls 'natural horsemanship,' or NH, but which I call 'alternative horsemanship'[13] ' henceforth AH) among British leisure riders, through interview-based studies of alternative enthusiasts (Birke 2007, 2008, Latimer and Birke 2009). Birke (2007) demonstrates how AH enthusiasts describe their methods as kinder, gentler, and more interested in a two-way relationship with the horse than the traditional methods they rejected. I found this distinction came through clearly in the narratives of key instigators, Pat Parelli and Monty Roberts, during their live demonstrations. Roberts, for example, in both his autobiography (1997) and his live demonstrations, likens his father's brutality towards horses with similar brutality towards the young Roberts. "He taught me a thing or two about 'respect'" he says, "and do you know how old-timers spell respect? F.E.A.R."

A kinder, more intelligent way

In order to begin to describe the AH movement as it appeared within my ethnography, I will introduce one of my participants. Hannah was keen to emphasise that she was not your typical 'natural horsemanship person.' Petite, blonde, mid-forties, and fiercely determined, Hannah kept her four horses at the home she was born in, a 40-acre estate, complete with 7-bedroom, part-17th Century farm house. The horses had vintage railway carriages as field shelters. She had mixed feelings about the property: sure, it was beautiful, but the money was made in trading slaves, so the family was cursed, she told

[13] I prefer the term alternative horsemanship because I found 'natural horsemanship' to be a highly contested term among this movement, where 'alternative' seems to capture the consistent distinction against mainstream/traditional methods. Monty Roberts – a key proponent in the 'revolution' – rejects the term 'natural horsemanship' because he declares that no horsemanship can be wholly natural, the natural thing for horses to do is to eat grass on the plains, it is our responsibility to recognise that before all else. Pat Parelli – an equally monumental figure in the movement, declares the exact opposite – stating as his number 1 'Principle of horsemanship': "Horsemanship is natural". He refers to the way that relations between horses and people are based on natural embodied capacities to communicate and co-operate. Often, despite Roberts' rejection, the term 'natural horsemanship' is the one that stuck among my participants, in referring to a broad range of non-traditional systems.

me darkly. Hannah's childhood had been pony obsessed, her mother, apparently a formidable woman (she died young), had bought Hannah and her sisters the best possible ponies and expected them to produce serious results, competing in 'working hunters'[14] and show pony[15] classes up and down the country. Hannah told me of a time when her mother had chased her into the lorry and struck her with a dressage whip, frustrated at her poor competitive performance. Showing is much like a beauty contest for horses (and, to some extent, for riders too, see Birke and Brandt 2009:192). It is among the most old-fashioned of sports in terms of traditionalist aesthetics, and the most exclusive in terms of participants, many of whom are from old equestrian, upper class families. Hannah loved the fact that her upbringing had given her an 'in' to this elitist world, she knew all the names, she knew all the judges. Hannah also recognised, sadly, that she seemed to have inherited her mother's ability to fall out with staff, family and friends alike. Repeatedly, she tried to be nice and pleasant, but invariably, ended up feeling she was not being taken seriously enough, not being listened to, or respected. Perhaps it was her small stature, or girlish looks, she speculated, but she seemed to keep having to lose her temper in order to get anywhere in life.

Hannah had a mission. She wanted to qualify to compete (or even win, she speculated, eyes wide with ambition) at The Horse of The Year Show (HOYS) on one of her beautiful well-bred show horses, and what is more, she wanted to do so having used only kind, natural, intelligent training methods. She would not even *carry* a whip (which is highly unusual in terms of etiquette in the show ring), and when, in this vision, she would be interviewed by Horse and Hound (the most prestigious and old fashioned of the equestrian magazines) she would attest that a kinder approach is what got her to the top. That would ruffle some feathers among the highly traditional, elitist, and snobby showing set, she said with glee. That would show them how backward their attitudes were. It would take something like a HOYS win to achieve real change, Hannah explained, because the alternative horsemanship movement was currently too strongly associated with 'numpties' and 'horse huggers', amateurs who don't really *do* anything with their horses.

[14]Show class that involves judging the quality of a hunting pony. The pony is judged on conformation (body shape), jumping style, and ridden manners (obedience).

[15]Show ponies are judges according to 'type' in different classes, much as Crufts dogs are judged by breed standard.

Hannah was rightly recognising a demographic trend among alternative horsemanship enthusiasts. Many were middle aged, middle class, amateurs who found themselves at odds with the stark professionalism and pragmatism that permeates throughout traditional pedagogical systems. The British Horse Society is associated strongly with the phrase 'traditional' horsemanship, often acting as the 'status quo' against which alternative systems pit themselves. In fact, the BHS, a charity, was not so long ago a revolutionary force itself, instigating the first formal training and examination programme for equestrian instructors and professionals (grooms, yard managers and so on), in an effort to modify and raise safety and welfare standards (first exams, 1948). It also began an evaluation and certification scheme for approved livery yards and riding schools. It campaigns for safety (e.g. reducing tax on riding helmets), bridleway access, and welfare legislation. The BHS exams are still well respected throughout the equestrian industry, such that barely an equestrian job is advertised without reference to the relevant BHS stage (standard) required. The BHS has 92,000 members, and also acts as the central affiliation point for local riding clubs, so its presence is felt throughout the equestrian sphere as a background, bureaucratic hum of legislation and regulation.

BHS training was set up with professional equestrianism in mind (on which, more to follow in Section Two), teaching students how to be efficient, effective workers on busy yards. The professional image of the BHS also made it alluring to many of my participants, who, as we saw in Chapter One, were liable to feeling excluded and belittled in comparison to the really real horsemanship of professionals. Several of my participants had taken 'BHS Stages' with no intention of an equestrian career, but as a marker of their own capacity and in line with the general rhythms of ambition, testing and measured progress that occupied many equestrian spaces. However, BHS training did not fulfil the desires of one-horse leisure owners to perfect their emotive relationship with their own, special equine partner. It did not afford nor encourage a high degree of personalisation, and often left them looking for something more 'about the relationship' as Jo put it. One owner told me why the BHS didn't work for her horse, “It was all the 'BHS way,' no flexibility, just this is how it has to be done because this is how it has to be done. They wouldn't be interested in thinking about it from any other angle, like thinking about what he [the horse] might actually need that might not fit that, what might actually suit *us*.”

It is against this background that the revolution in horsemanship has gained traction. Latimer and Birke (2009) relate enthusiasm for 'natural horsemanship' with a broader counter-culture movement, which both rejects the industrialisation of nature and emphasises ethics as *individual* lifestyle choices. This movement, they explain, can be seen in the growth of 'natural' remedies, diets and technologies, as well as in the 'democratisation' of relationships with animals. It involves a rejection of 'tradition-as-culture' and an imperative on individuals to make informed choices, rather than trusting the patterns of the masses or predecessors to provide the ethical answer (2009:23). This reflects the drive toward personalised horse care choices, that accompanies the increase in one horse owning, amateur participants, as demonstrated in Chapter One. However, it also begins to explain that it is precisely those perpetual novice, non-professionals, competing at lower standards, and riding 'just for fun' who are most attracted towards alternative training methods. I will return to this point throughout, but for now, we can recognise Hannah's discomfort about being associated with ineffective, unproductive community of riders who she glossed as over emotional, untalented, and undistinguished. Occasionally, Hannah self-described as a 'snob,' she couldn't bare 'spot-jobs' (spotted horses) or 'pikey ponies' (coloured cobs), and she saw the fashionable riding-wear trends as genuinely repulsive.

To Hannah, 'traditional' horsemanship was an ambiguous concept. It captured prestige, respectability, and competence, but also was linked with physical domination, cruelty, and narrow mindedness. For many, the term 'traditional' was used as a euphemism for 'tough.' For example, Lucy asked Jo whether she would recommend Fran for a lesson, Jo responded, “She’s not for everyone, she's very, you know, *traditional* about things, if you know what I mean. She likes horses and people to do what their told.” On the other hand, 'traditional' could simply refer to ordinary, or normal, as a pose to the novelty of the new alternatives, such that the local equestrian college would be recognisable as a 'traditional' learning environment, and dressage, show jumping and eventing were known as 'traditional' sports compared to the new-fangled horse agility[16].

[16]Horse Agility has been growing in popularity and developing formality over the last ten years. It involves a course much like dog agility, to be completed with the human running on the ground alongside the horse. Low level competition has the horse on a lead, and higher level, the horse is 'at liberty' (released), negotiating various obstacles to go under, over, across or through.

In alternative rhetoric, traditional is to alternative, as domination is to kindness. This is a generalisation that many refute: it is *good* horsemanship that doesn't require domination, I was told by one irate traditionalist rider, and, “Horse whisperers did NOT invent the idea of getting horses to want to do what you want them to do, that's just good, old fashioned, horsemanship.” Nevertheless, it is easy to see how the alternativists' distinction gains traction. I found plenty of evidence for 'obedience' and 'submission' as central themes in 'traditional' riding lessons (those with BHS trained instructors, who did not market themselves explicitly as alternatives). One common narrative which earns particular distaste from the revolutionaries follows a model of 'horse versus rider,' in which the horse is presumed likely to be looking to usurp the rider at every possible opportunity (more on this common narrative in Chapter Three). In these narratives of opposition, it falls upon the rider to coerce, convince, or otherwise manipulate the horse into yielding. This instigates particular requirements for the 'docility' of riders too; riders must respond in the appropriate way – must 'live up to' the challenge posed by the horse and recognised by the experienced observer, instructor or judge. Occasionally, I saw riders chastised by their instructors, and it was often over their hesitancy in taking assertive (sometimes aggressive) control ordered by the instructor, usually via strong use of the whip, legs, or reins. Instructors could seem incensed when, from their point of view, the rider ‘went soft’ and ‘wimped out’ in moments where the horse required clarity and commitment.

> “*Use your stick! I said USE IT! USE IT! YOU'RE NOT USING IT!*” Christine, a roughly 60-year-old instructor of great regional acclaim, barked in increasingly terrifying tones at her student as a horse and rider approached, and then refused a jump, after multiple failed attempts. The rider's eventual 'tickle' with the whip (as Christine called it) did not appease her – it was too little and too late, the rider was summoned over and berated. The horse had needed one good 'reminder' (smack) behind the saddle, exactly when Christine had asked for it, she insisted. If the rider wasn't going to follow her advice, she might as well get off. “*You either want to jump the fence, or you don't,*” Christine pushed. The rider, Lucy, a 24-year-old, stared down towards her horse’s neck during Christine's barrage, wiped away a tear and gritted her teeth to hold back more, apologised and tried again. More tears followed after the lesson, and once Christine was out of earshot, Lucy could tell me why. Lucy's body “kept freezing” she told me, so she continued to fail to use the whip properly, ending the session thoroughly demoralised and ashamed.
>
> From field notes, May 2016.

Later, I will show how equestrianism within traditional settings (riding schools, colleges, competitions) contains much internal ambiguity, sensitivity and conflict regarding the use of force and the recognition of 'naughtiness', but the vignette above, which was not

uncommon, is a prototypical example of the very meaning of the term 'traditional' within alternative horsemanship rhetoric.

Embodied attunement

The alternative to this horse/human battle ground, in Hannah's words, was all about achieving a real connection with the horse. This was exemplified by the process Hannah worked through with her most difficult horse, Bobo. Bobo was a sleek, mahogany brown, athlete of a horse, 'clean limbed' and with a fabulous 'length of stride[17]', in horsey terms. Hannah had acquired her cheaply, since Bobo had begun chasing people out of her field and refusing to be handled. At just five years old, she had not even begun ridden work yet, and, with bloodlines that linked her to previous champions, and looks to die for, she was a project that Hannah could not resist, brimming with potential, and in need of deep understanding. At first, Bobo didn't appreciate Hannah's efforts to 'turn her around', often putting her ears back, snaking her neck, diving aggressively into Hannah's space, or wheeling round to kick out with her back legs. A sea-change in Bobo and Hannah's relationship occurred when they completed a 'Join-Up®'. This is the process discovered (*not* invented, he asserts) by Monty Roberts, which he describes as mimicking communication mechanisms among equine herd members. The human uses body language to influence the unrestrained horse, at first, moving them forwards around a 'round pen' (corral) in each direction, and then offering an 'invitation' which allows the horse to 'choose the human as herd leader'. This is achieved by walking away from the horse with conviction, and at this point, in a successful join-up, the horse will actively follow after the human, eventually placing their softly blowing nose against the human's back. Learning join-up, for Hannah, involved recognising the impact of her body on the horse, as well as that of the horse's body on her. It involved 'tuning in' to small movements and gestures, and re-considering the horse as an intentional being, full of complex instincts and behaviours that were other-than-human. "It isn't about if she is naughty. *We* are the ones who should adjust our training in line with *their* needs, *their* language," Hannah asserted, glowing after her residential course. When Bobo followed Hannah around with no rope attached after Join Up, Hannah and Bobo had tuned in to one another, and, in doing so, defied the system that wasn't working for either of them. Hannah felt Bobo had become a more willing, active partner in the training process,

[17]A horse who can take big, swinging steps is considered athletic and elegant.

Bobo's choices were being acknowledged and allowed - and she was choosing the right thing.

Free minds and real connections

For 'revolutionaries' like Hannah, escape from the fixity of the traditional system seems to involve connecting with the horse in a deep and profound way, becoming interested in the horses' sensory and emotional experience (as a *non-human* person), and becoming tuned in to the embodied affect of horse and human on one another. The sort of connection Hannah communicated seems covalent with current trends within contemporary multispecies literature. I use the term broadly here, to refer to the aim to include the 'more than human' elements in social science studies of 'naturalcultural' (Haraway 2008) lifeworlds. There, authors (e.g. Despret, 2004, 2013, Despret and Buchanon 2016, Game 2001, Haraway 2003, 2008, Ingold 2000, 2006, 2008, Kohn 2013, Locke 2017) advocate recognising that humans are permeable to affective relationships with their non-human environments. A common device is to hold this sort of 'openness' to the animal as a contrast to traditional Western (and particularly, scientific) ways of imaging humans as bounded units that can think *about* animals in an objective, analytical, or representational way with a sterile and detached 'view from nowhere' (Nagel 1989).

Vinciane Despret is a key spokesperson of the argument that scientists (and others) ought to recognise 'Embodied empathy: feeling/seeing/thinking bodies undo and redo each other, reciprocally though not symmetrically, as partial perspectives that attune themselves to each other' (2013:61). Similarly, Tim Ingold's description of 'openness' is the perception of an environment that is full of lively entities, it is a world of process and movement, in which nothing is fixed or whole or finished, in which organisms move along paths, creating entanglements with other elements of the life world – in fact, organisms *are* entanglements (2000, 2006, 2008). This, he compares to the imagined 'closure' of a 'logic of inversion' (1993:218-219, 2006:11), in which, he asserts, Western thought expects to find other entities as pre-existing objects to be thought *about* and looked at, like stage decorations and props. Donna Haraway's version of 'open' refers to situations in which people recognise the subjective *responses* of their non-human companion species, and so, come to terms (at least, to some extent) with the moral and relational entanglements that they live in. "It is the shock of getting it," she explains, "*This,* and *here,* are who and where we are?" (2008:368). Haraway's 'open' is therefore

part of her argument that communication between humans and non- humans can -in fact, does - occur (all be it, not of the 'body snatching' or 'ventriloquism' sort, she clarifies 2008:226). She argues, “Response is comprehending that subject-making connection is real. Response is face-to-face in the contact zone of an entangled relationship. Response is in the open.” (2008:226-227)

A similar idea of openness has informed ethnographers methodological practices as well as theoretical analyses of human/animal relationships. For example, Anne Game (with horses, 2001) and Piers Locke (with elephants, 2017) both speak of being 'open' to experiencing the animal in order to learn about human relatedness with it. As Piers Locke explains:

> In questioning the parameters of personhood, I did so without concern for authoritative legal judgment or scientific opinion, and I did so through my ethnographic willingness to surrender my being and *open* myself to new modes of experience... Only later did I focus my attention on local logics of personhood, and furnish my direct experience of engaging with elephants as persons with theoretical justifications. (My italics, Locke 2017:358)

I refer to this literature because of the striking similarity between the way the above authors and some alternative horsemanship practitioners speak about discovering their 'togetherness' with the horse by being 'open' to an affective, embodied connection with it. Particularly interesting is that in both the alternative horsemanship movement and the multispecies literature, this togetherness is linked to a degree of epistemological emancipation, not total *freedom* from human-held ideas and representations as such, but the ability, or necessity, to think 'otherwise'. As Despret argues, being open to the ways animals affect us (and us them) involves allowing animals to surprise us, causing us to challenge pre-existing truths, and to reconfigure our questions (2004, 2006, 2013, Despret and Buchanon 2016). As in Locke's example above, affective experiences with animals seem to have the power to at least put on hold, if not reject, pre-established theoretical and representational thought, in order to experience something more affectively and intuitively 'open'. Alternative horsemanship rhetoric follows a similar argument that an opportunity to think 'otherwise' to the traditional status quo, allows, and comes through, recognition of authentic connectedness with horses. In both Monty Roberts's discourse, and Hannah’s, it is clear that the idea of resisting established and inherited wisdoms is intimately tied up with the promise of authenticity in the embodied forms of relatedness

that might be 'made available' in Despret's terms (2004:123)

The importance of epistemological freedom is particularly evident in that a common sentiment among self-described alternative enthusiasts held that traditionalists' biggest fault was their epistemological passivity, or even stubbornness. They were seen as stuck in their ways, dogmatic, backward, pretentious, unable, or unwilling, to think clearly for themselves in order to recognise the real horse's plight. This un-thinking condition earned both pity and anger from those who felt they had escaped it. There was a distrust of 'tradition' and a criticism of its potential to dull or even 'program' human minds. For example, in the following conversation with an alternative instructor:

> Rosie: But, taking it seriously now, why *would* you go about loading horses [onto lorries] the old-fashioned way?[18] What do they think they are doing? Why would that system be valuable or useful or desirable to them?
> Katy: I don't know?! It isn't! I mean, maybe they are thinking "Oh, I guess this is the way everyone does it so I'll just do that?!" Or maybe they are just thinking...I don't know..... they *aren't* thinking, are they?! That's the strange thing about it, they aren't seeing what's right in front of their noses!
>
> Dictaphone recording, September 2016

Clear here, and throughout the alternative horsemanship rhetoric, is the idea that the emancipation of horses relies upon the epistemological emancipation of their humans – until humans can escape from the blind traditional systems which have them stuck in adversarial battles with their horses and see the horse for what he/she really is, both horses and humans are effectively un-free, and so unable to connect in an authentic cooperative partnership.

I'd like to pause here to dwell on how this idealised equation between ideas of free-thinking and the capacity for real connection is prevalent throughout alternative training rhetoric. A clear example is that of Emma Massingale, whose training philosophy is summed up in her motto: "No Reins, No Rules!" and involves working with horses with no ropes or tack, in 'teams' (several horses at a time). Her most popular publicity stunt to date involved taking a group of untrained Connemara ponies to a small, isolated Irish island, where she lived off what she could catch in the sea, camping next to the ponies for a month, gradually training them 'on their own terms,' with no enclosure, no interference,

[18]The old-fashioned way we were discussing involved using a broom, bristles upturned, on the hind quarters (rump) of a reluctant horse to convince it onto the lorry.

no restraint.

Illustration 2: Emma Massingale, The Island Project, "No reins, no rules!"

Note the need for personal isolation, to put oneself on the edges of society, in order to enable a 'free' connection with the horse to flourish. Graeber describes particular forms of activism in strikingly relevant terms, wherein, “The structure of one's own act becomes a kind of micro-utopia, a concrete model for one’s vision of free society.” (Graeber 2009:210). The term *micro*-utopia is particularly apt. As I hope to begin to show in this chapter and throughout the thesis, moments that are identified as natural, ethical and political symbiosis with horses are debatable, partial and fleeting. The more vigilant observer might spot a neck strap and a schooling whip among Massingale's apparel and wonder about the formalisation of movement (the horses lined up as if in parade) that evidences her 'no rules' partnership, but here I am getting ahead of myself. I have demonstrated the centrality of the idea of 'open mindedness' among alternative horsemanship rhetoric, I have shown that scholars of multispecies relationships' concept of 'open' shares an interest in affectivity, embodiment, and more-than-human relatedness, and I have described a link between the idea of real connection and that of free-thinking through challenging or escaping the norm. The next section of my argument involves

showing the ways in which the alternative movement can itself come to be critiqued as a site for un-free (horse and human) minds.

Different sorts of pedagogical (en)closure

For this section, I will compare the traditional BHS system with one strain of alternative training, Parelli Natural Horsemanship, a California based company with international scope. Parelli, like the BHS, has a system of hierarchy based on the cherished knowledge contained within a community (which their marketing refers to as a 'vault of knowledge' and a 'goldmine of information'). This exclusive community of knowledge-acquisition is rather brilliantly named the 'Savvy club' – the term savvy conjuring practical knowledge, good judgement, but also shrewdness, even perhaps secrecy, and a feeling of being 'in the know.' Access to this club is bought (annual fees: £130 Bronze membership, £320 Silver, £640 Gold – these include different packages of DVDs and online learning resources/community access – compare BHS £67 per year gold membership to include rider-road-user insurance). The BHS training systems involve lessons and exams on riding centre horses (testing the human, not the horse), and the syllabus recommends long periods of apprentice type practice, under the stewardship of a boss or mentor. In Parelli, the educational structure is designed with the single horse owner in mind. Students work their way through multiple 'levels' with their own horses, self-monitoring their relational achievements using a syllabus-like check list of the Parelli 'games' they can complete to the required standards, and then, if they wish, sending video 'auditions' in to be certified, which earns them a colour co-ordinated 'savvy string' to use with their 'carrot stick.[19]'

Parelli explicitly attends to emotional, embodied, relational skills, through their formal training and examinations, where the traditional BHS exam syllabus focusses on industry-readiness, health, safety and efficiency. My argument will be that in making relation skills explicit and formal, with the aim of enabling relational skills to be recognised and flourish, the alternative model in fact 'closes' some possibilities that the traditional system leaves open, and that this closure is felt by its critics.

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[19]The carrot stick is a tool to 'extend the trainer's arm' and touch various parts of the horses body. Among critics, it is a re-branded orange whip. On the naturalisation of this and other NH tools, see Latimer and Birke 2009:18-19.

Formalising relational skills

In traditional pedagogy, relational and moral skill sets seem all but absent from formalised pedagogical resources (syllabi, course materials, books). To illustrate: within the BHS stage 1 syllabus, of 93 points on which the student is assessed, only 3 explicitly describe interacting with the horse as a living, reactive being.[20] Many of the assessment points involve competence in the storing, fitting, and management of equipment, fencing, grass, health and safety procedures and so on. Even those points involving interaction with the horse almost always describe the skills mechanically. Consider the similarity between the following two assessment points: "Rider should maintain appropriate length of stirrups" - this refers to the rider's management of equipment, ability to know their own leg length and balance point and adjust the tack accordingly at the beginning of the ride. The exact same level of detail and wording is used in the immediately succeeding point, "Rider should maintain appropriate length of rein" (2012:14). Framed here as an equipment management technique, this point describes the manual and emotional techniques intricately involved in the communication and control offered by the connection of the reins between the rider's hands and the metal bit in the horse's mouth. This is an important, subtle, and ever-evolving skill set that riders work on throughout their equestrian lives. No doubt, the BHS examiner will assess the rider's competence using a subjective judgement that encompasses much of this complexity. But this relational skill is hard to define and pin down – and appears apparently invisible, or perhaps more accurately, implicit, within the technical skills described in the syllabus.

Parelli pedagogical structures deal more formally and explicitly with relational skills and teach them to all students from the very beginning. The vast majority of the points on the Parelli Level One check list explicitly refer to the horse as a living, feeling, reactive being. For example,

> -Saddle is placed gently and politely, like a hug.
> -Student asks permission before forking leg over the horse's back, settles into saddle politely and with feeling.
>
> Parelli Level One Checklist, 2004:6

[20] To make this categorisation, if the description talked about the horse in a way that could refer to a plastic replica model of a horse, with no feeling, experience, or possibility for unpredictable or individualised reaction, I did not consider it explicitly relational.

A similar assessment in the BHS syllabus simply requires riders to mount and dismount 'safely and correctly' (BHS Stage One Syllabus, 2012:14).

Relational and moral learning is formalised within Parelli pedagogy in many ways. For example, training interactions are systematised into a number of set 'games' (while traditional equestrian language speaks of 'working the horse', and as a competent horse as 'well produced'). Each game requires the handler to move the horse in a particular way, and is taught to the horse incrementally in stages, using codified body language, and through the application of 'pressure' (in four 'phases' of increasing strength) which is 'released' when the horse does the right thing.

Parelli provides all students with 8 Principles of Horsemanship which they are encouraged to learn by heart:

1. Horsemanship is natural.
2. Make and teach no assumptions.
3. Communication is two or more individuals sharing the same idea.
4. Horses and humans have mutual responsibilities.
5. The attitude of justice is effective.
6. Body language is the universal language.
7. Horses teach humans, humans teach horses.
8. Principles, purpose, and time are the tools of teaching

These accompany the “Ten Qualities of a Horsemen”, “Seven Keys to Success”, eight “Mutual Responsibilities” and nine “Core Values.” The most celebrated and berated of Parelli's systems for formalising relational skill is the “Horsenality System.” This aims to help students understand their horse’s needs by regarding their characters along two axes, extrovert/introvert (how much they 'want' to move their feet) and right brain/left brain (how fearful and reactive versus confident and thoughtful they are). This produces four basic categories; LBI (confident, lazy) LBE (confident, playful) RBI (fearful, tentative) or RBE (fearful, reactive). Note the ‘scientific’ sounding language, Parelli makes much of its

claim to represent the 'real' horse and, in that aim, refers lightly but persistently to ecology, psychology, and cognitive science. Students can attempt to work out their horse’s horsenality themselves, using a chart like the one below (this one has been filled in with black spots), or can purchase a unique horsenality report from Parelli which involves filling in a detailed questionnaire about the horse’s behaviours and attitudes. They can even purchase a 'match report' which works out the 'Humanality' of the person involved too, and gives advice regarding the way the horsenality and humanality are likely to work together and influence one another.

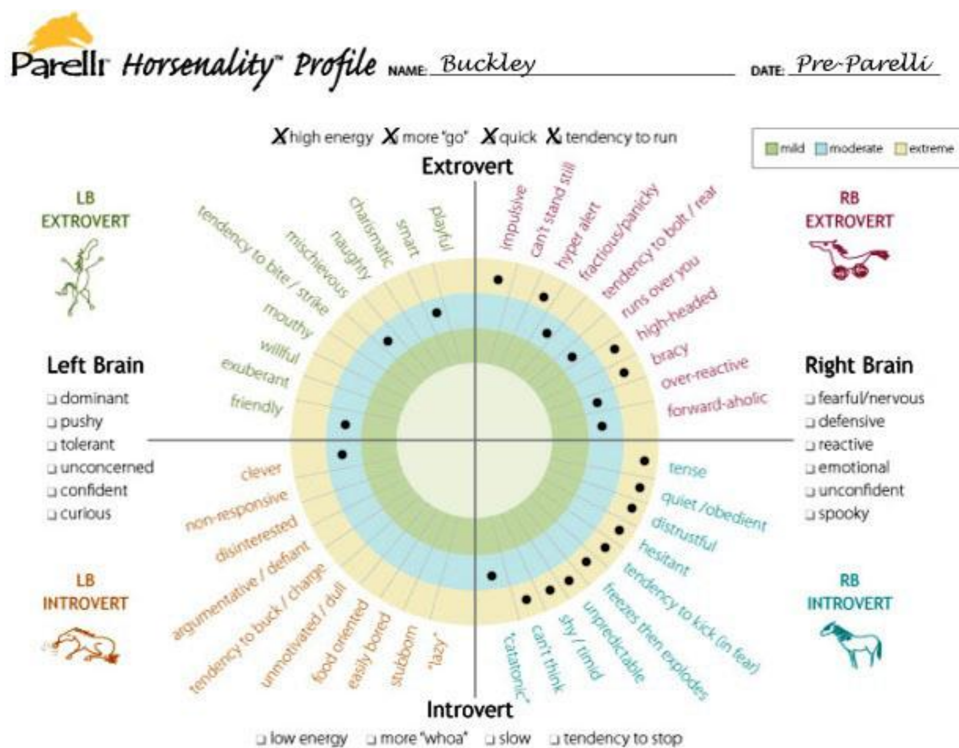

Illustration 3: An example of a completed Horsenality chart

In comparison, there is no formalised typology of behavioural types or character traits in the BHS system. Stereotypes were often employed (as described in Chapter One), but generally *as* stereotypes, and not fixed and robust typologies. When describing their horse’s personality (which people persistently do) horse people often emphasise the specificity of the individual case; each horse is *thoroughly* individual, and often *remarkably* unlike what he/she might seem like, or should be like (“He's much more sensitive than your typical cob,” Rochelle told me, about Dougal). Bertie recoiled upon reading a paper I wrote which contained a transcript wherein he had described a particular horse as 'dominant' and insisted her rider (Lucy, whose body 'froze' in her lessons with

Christine) 'win the battle' to prevent further battles emerging. He did not enjoy reading back his own words. He told me:

> It's not like she's always dominant. She can be a very sweet mare. There are plenty of times when she has been really switched on, really with the programme. But then she can really push Lucy around, and I was thinking, this is going to get dangerous. And Lucy is, like, the LEAST assertive person – she just won't stand up for herself – and I had to get her going- I had to get her -. But when I just read it like you've put it, just that one bit of the lesson, which is just one lesson – it makes me sound – well - like a bully to be honest. And it doesn't really describe the horse. She's not THAT dominant. Or me as an instructor. Not properly.
>
> Dictaphone recording October 2016

Bertie's criticism highlights the contingency of narratives containing relational judgements. His descriptions were right for the impact they needed to create in the moment but were not holistic or lasting statements about the true and complete nature of the horse. Bertie's account of Lucy's 'dominant' mare was part of the constant flux in which Lucy and her mare's relationship is continually developing along with Bertie's account of it.

Parelli's efforts to enable riders to recognise horses' individualities were criticised by traditionalists precisely for disabling that very capacity. While some saw it as harmless fun to work out, mock, and then quickly ignore, their horses 'Horsenality' through accessing the chart online, others were less tolerant of Horsenality language, arguing that it was that it was a ridiculous attempt to systematise, gain ownership over, 'brand' and market the ineffable 'feel' and 'connection' between a good rider and their horse. To critics, the sorts of connectedness possible through these schemes was all form and no substance, too programmatic, too invented, too artificial.

Recognisability is enclosure

The traditionalists' distaste for such relational explicitness and formality resonates in some ways with the sort of 'critical openings' that Naisargi Dave describes among a very different group of participants. For some of the Indian queer activists Dave studies, the ideal ethical aim is to resist normativity itself, rather than to resist a particular normative code or truism. However, this ethical way of life ends up all but unsustainable, it holds activists constantly undone under their own scrutiny, particularly since the sorts of political action required to make significant changes to society seem to require a

recognisable identity. Dave describes (among other dynamics) how an activist letter writing network, which aimed at enabling and empowering the voices of marginalised women, began authorising only the more eloquent, politically competent voices in its desire to provide a legitimate, outward facing, politically effective, service. In Dave's language, the desire for inclusivity and possibility, ended up creating yet another type of '(en)closure', a new normativity, a new *narrowing* of human possibility (2011:12-14).

Dave's use of the term closure reflects her debt to Foucault (Dave 2011:4-5), particularly in the sense that the concept she employs is both epistemological and political. She describes activism as an ethical practice that exists in critical relation with the narrowing effect of normative morality: “Always in creative opposition to the normalisation of lives and words” (2011:5). The link here between lives and words is important. The activists aim to expand and open the possibilities available to them in terms of how they might be known, and how they might therefore live. But “Invention is always also a loss,” Dave shows (2012:36), emergence creates new (en)closures; what begins as 'embryonic' quickly becomes 'ossified'. By naming the identity of activist groups in recognisable terms, something is always curtailed from whom they could have been otherwise. Similarly, when the alternative practitioners focussed formal pedagogy towards relational skills, they narrowed possibilities for the sorts of relationships that can emerge as legitimate and recognisable (within horsenality types, learned principles, categorised phases of pressure and so on).

The heavy reliance on apprenticeship-type learning in the BHS takes on a new light now, not (only) as a way of instilling obedience, exclusivity and normativity, but as a medium through which students might be able to absorb that which cannot be formalised or communicated verbally, the *idiosyncratic* ways in which narratives such as the oppositional one described above can be employed. For example, the BHS Stage 1 syllabus reports that reaching the appropriate level in giving the horse a basic groom (removing mud and loose hair from a well behaved, healthy animal, not including clipping, plaiting, trimming and so on) required a minimum of 80 hours of practice under light supervision (2012:5), though exactly *what* is supposed to be learned during this extended period of time, is, of course, unrecorded. This lack of formality regarding relational skills can be seen as providing an openness of possibility to the extent that 'feel' for the horse is left formally uncategorised, personally variable, un-described,

ungraspable, unsettled: a talent rather than a transmittable technique.

Free minds and real connections (again)

What is striking about the traditionalist critiques of alternative horsemanship is that they *also* often follow the form of linking poor connectivity to un-free thinking; only now, alternative horsemanship is the problem case. A common critique targeted towards Parelli members, and alternative practitioners more generally, is that they are cult-like, too easily won over, following instructions and marketing spiel like robots, or 'sheep', as seen in the following conversation with Jill (Bertie's wife):

> Jill: We were once at a show and these people had been trying to load. It had been a couple of hours and I went over and said, you know, if you want a hand, Bertie and I are here, and we do a bit of this sort of thing and might be able to help. But as I was saying this another woman ran up shrieking “I've got a Parelli halter! I've got a Parelli halter!” and I went “Bye then!” and turned around and walked away!
> *Everybody laughed.*
> Jill: Like, a Parelli halter is going to work some special magic and then the horse will just walk right on. Good luck with that!
> Rosie (once laughter had subsided): But do you think she actually thought that is what would happen?
> Jill: Probably. They are like a cult. They don't know what to think, they think what they are told, and if they are told the halter is magic, they believe the halter is magic. And if it doesn't work, which it won’t, they will think it’s just that they don't have the magic touch so they will pay for more magic courses.
> From field notes, March 2017.

As in the anti-traditional rhetoric, critiques of the alternative movement often link the dull-thinking of humans to the un-freedom of horses. To be sure, there are ready grounds for finding un-freedom in alternative training, despite its reliance on a rhetoric of free (horse and human) choice. For example, alternative practitioners often refer to horses’ wild instincts as herd animals (who, as Roberts and Parelli explain, *want* to have a herd leader); as a flight/prey animal (who cannot help but respond with extreme evasive reaction until trained otherwise); and as an 'into pressure' animal (who cannot help but resist and fight against physical forces of ropes and so on, until trained to do otherwise). Through these explanatory principles, narratives fluctuate between subjective and objective renderings of horses as choosing agents or instinctive creatures (see also, Birke 2008). There is a politically powerful dual framing: natural herd dynamics *authorise* the horse’s positive choice to have a leader, while on the other hand, learning mechanisms

and instincts *de-politicise* the horse's potential resistance. For example, in the join-up process described between Hannah and Bobo, the horse's movement away from the human is often described as 'flight instinct,' while their movement toward the human is understood as 'free choice'. As Laidlaw noted of some anthropological treatments of agency, "We only mark them down as agency when people's choices seem to us to be the right ones" (2002:315).

While alternative theories might defend the horse's ethical right to choose, they also give grounds to remove the very possibility of resistance. Jodi, Parelli instructor told me, "If you think the horse said "No", you either asked the wrong question, or you asked the question in the wrong way". This puts the onus on the human to adjust for the horse, yet it also takes away any possibility for the horse to *have* a 'no' response. What might look like resistance or opposition is described as a horse who doesn't understand yet, or is enacting 'natural' social dynamics, or is plagued by problematic instincts. At the same time, a 'choice' which is corrected still features as a choice which has been 'allowed,' even as it is actively trained away, as in the system described by an alternative trainer below:

> Traditional methods would be to keep the lead rope short and try to make the horse stand still, get strong, use your shoulder, maybe get a big guy, or get really tough and angry, *make* the horse stand, show the horse who's boss. What we do is so different. We leave the line [rope] long. We say: He has the right to move. It's his body, it's his choice. But there are consequences to it. When he moves, I'll correct him, I'll put him back. Then he can *learn* the value of standing still. *Learn* it instead of be *made* to do it. You see the difference?
>
> Sally, alternative horsemanship trainer teaching students at residential course, Dictaphone recording.

Through the system described above, horses learn to self-govern their own behaviours (cf Foucault), to become more 'responsible' partners in Parelli and Roberts's terms.

Clearly, we can see moral agitation around the notion of choice, as was introduced in Chapter One. And, we can see the import of the notion of 'natural reality' for making moral sense of the real horse as a subject of ethical concern. Enabling/assigning the horse's choices is a matter of knowing the horse's nature, and the alternative movement is replete with such references to naturalness. However, there are competing claims on naturalness from the traditional camp. Criticisms of alternative training suggest that it is

all a trick, that it is a wolf in sheep's clothing, every bit as interested in taking control of the horse, only *marketing* it as 'love' and 'leadership' to appeal to naïve and novice amateurs who can't see the relationship for what it *really* is. In this discourse, traditional horsemanship has the claim to naturalness and authenticity, pre-dating the modern, marketed, fantastical invention of alternative horsemanship, which can be considered fake, phoney and superficial. "I went to one demonstration and I walked out when he started using his 'carrot stick'" Leeanne told me. "Who is he to talk about non-violence and all this, and then just use a big orange stick and think we won't see it's a whip? OK, so he didn't thrash the horse with it, but then, neither do we." Even demonstrations of impressively 'free' partnership such as that of Emma Massingale's beach stunt, are not *necessarily* recognised as evidence of real partnership. "The horses all look dead-eyed. Like they have given up," Leeanne told me. The horses' apparent complete compliance rendered them machine-like, too predictable, uncanny, *too* signed up to the rider's requests for this to look like a real, legitimate, free-thinking, recognisable partnership at all.

The oppositional narrative I identified as common within traditional systems, might defy the horses *right* to resist, but it does, at least, allow or even celebrate the *possibility* of equine resistance – an 'open' acknowledgement (we might say) that horses want different things from people (see Despret 2016:103-106). The ethical, relational skill within that sort of narrative then involves *how* the horses are coerced or convinced otherwise – such that Christine's instruction of how to use the whip would be fodder for a complex debate within traditional horsemanship itself.

What looks like open mindedness from one perspective (Hannah challenging norms to recognise authentic embodied connectivity with Bobo) looks closed-minded, cultish and gullible from another. This means the prerogative to 'learn from the horse' is not easily met, since what might count as signs of accomplishing that learning are clearly a matter of debate – even 'co-operative' behaviour is contestable. Emma Massingale's flawless display of good partnership with her unrestrained horses is interpreted, by some, as evidence of over-programming and uncanny biddableness. Bertie's attempts to elicit authority in his student, having recognised a wilful agency in her horse, is seen as the mindless projection of traditionalist dogma and domination. There is an inside and an outside to these relationships, which means 'bringing the animal in' as the multispecies

authors advise, is an interpretative and representational challenge. This is a 'horse multiple' (derived from Anne-Marie Mol's phrase, 'the body multiple' 2002) and one description will not do. Yet – the snag - all parties agree there is one, real, natural horse who ought to be properly recognised.

Both traditional *and* alternative descriptions of equine subjectivity seem to be felt to be too narrow, too closed, too prescriptive, too stunting when viewed from other perspective. While in the multispecies literature, 'openness' is a form of attunement, in contrast, *opening*, in Dave's description - a verb rather than a noun – emphasises that while one can attempt an 'opening' through critique, one cannot maintain an 'open' state. Rather than looking for a state of 'openness' within alternative or traditional relationships, the next section goes on to look at *practices* of 'opening' the mind, and then to describe the ethical import of the forms of closure that are manifested during these interactions with horses.

Flexible forms of closure

This section aims to show that the imperative to adjust to each horse flexibly through responsive interaction, advocated within both traditional and alternative training discourse, requires practices of opening and, particularly, closure. The imperative to learn from the horse was evident throughout my fieldwork. Here is Jodi, Parelli instructor again:

> You think you have got it, the system that works, you think you finally 'get' it, and then a new horse comes along who just knocks you for six. He doesn't do what he's meant to. He hasn't read the book. The things that you believe should work, just don't work. You have to rethink it. You have to figure out what works for him, for this horse, and maybe you learn something new.
>
> Dictaphone Recording, August 2016

and Bertie, speaking to his student at the start of a lesson, before proposing an approach they hadn't tried before to overcome a stubborn problem[21]:

[21]The problem was the horse would not complete 'lateral' movements – moving sideways. The new approach was to practice them more from the ground, without the rider on the horses back. This would be considered a typically alternative horsemanship approach to the issue. Bertie was backtracking on his previous advice that the horse understood perfectly well, and was now considering that the horse was confused after all.

> Horses are horses - they keep you on your toes... the minute you start telling someone what the horse is like, it will probably prove you wrong anyway. You just gotta keep learning from the horse you are riding, not riding the horse you think you've got, or the horse you had yesterday.
>
> Dictaphone Recording, March 2017

My participants, I feel, would broadly admire Haraway's description of feeling 'redone molecule by molecule' (2008:217) through relation with their animals, and of having to reconsider the meaning *of* partnership as part of the very pursuit of it.

Epistemological independence and responsibility

One way in which people (from both camps) practise open-minded agility to learn from the horse is through articulating the import of deviating from *any* established systematic knowledge about the horse. This can be seen in Jodi's comments that opened this chapter and advocating looking 'outside' the system you are closest to. On one occasion, Jodi was frustrated that some new Parelli students had decided to ditch the system. On finding that their horses didn't really sit in any of the Horsenality types, they had mutually agreed the system was a sham and cancelled their shared appointments with Jodi. In response, Jodi emphasised that it was a common misconception that horses are supposed to end up fitting easily into just one Horsenality. It was more about tendencies, she explained, including between the types and even outside of them, and Parelli students should be encouraged to interpret *and re-interpret* their horse’s Horsenality on a moment by moment basis. The Horsenality tool was meant as a way of refining students 'feel', not replacing it. As Haraway asserts: 'Training is, or can be, about differences not named by taxonomy.' (2008:223).

A similar sentiment accompanied interpretations of the BHS syllabus, as only *guidelines* from which to flexibly deviate, with a clear understanding that 'real life' exists outside of the (any) pedagogical system. Even the instructor on an exam revision day, while answering questions about the 'proper' order in which to use grooming brushes, reminded us that,

> This isn't the way you have to do it forever more. Once you get out 'in the real world', you will start to learn …. but it's like a driving test. You do it the BHS way, and you learn the BHS way, and then you can adapt from there. You can return to it if you have a difficult horse or something, and then if someone gets injured, at least you can say “I was doing it the proper way!” So, for the exam, just get into

the rhythm of doing it the BHS way. Think about what the examiner is seeing.

Dictaphone recording, June 2016

I don't wish to follow Ingold in using this evidence to suggest that 'open' connectivity eschews, or does *without*, the 'closure' of formal grids, categories, and examination systems. Rather, I follow Dave in her argument that navigating the tension *between* established enclosures of recognisability and emergence of the new through possibility to be otherwise, constitutes a particular type of ethical work. It seemed an ethically important practice for my participants to relate to relatively established systems of knowledge, in large part, to actively and explicitly deviate from them (as above), but not to do without them altogether. Horse people were liable to tell me how their horse *wasn't* quite like a particular theory, didn't fit within a category, required a deviation from the Parelli system, or didn't like to be handled exactly 'the BHS way'. Both BHS and Parelli systems of knowledge not only create a risk of cultish following and passivity, they also gave “affordance” (Keane 2014) for critical and creative deviation. If analytical knowledge is considered an epistemological distanciation compared to relationality of affective knowledge, then we could say that my participants often practised a 'double-distanciation' – critically and explicitly distancing themselves *from* systems of analysis, in order to relate *back* to the individual horse more closely.[22] It matters that affective relationality is practiced in explicit opposition to – and therefore relationship with - categorical analysis.

Part of being a good owner was being on the look-out for what is wrong with the system, how the available knowledge doesn't properly enable partnerships to flourish, how it could be improved or at least creatively applied for each particular horse. From those who originally learned from Monty Roberts, many fractions of different (and sometimes oppositional) horsemanship techniques sprung up; Practical horsemanship, Ethical horsemanship, Logical horsemanship (all business names). Such continual de-bunking and reforming is typical of modern thought (Boland 2013) and profitable, for some, too (Latimer and Munro 2015). Well known Parelli students left to create their own systems.

[22](we *could* argue, were it not for brevity's sake, that Ingold does the same to establish his own openness, see Heywood 2018:21-30 for a similar argument regarding recursive anthropology).

One responded to an audience member's question about the split: 'Parelli is great, it helped get me to where I am today, but I found myself wanting to do things a little bit differently than the Parelli system. I found I needed that bit of flexibility.' While Roberts and Parelli had been originators in unveiling the historicity, artificiality and domination in accepted methods, in fact they had begun a pattern of debunking and reforming to which they would become fodder themselves. Equitation science, a new academic discipline[23], emerged in the early 2000's, setting out to reveal '*The Truth about horses*' (McLean 2003), which included outing the (as they saw it) faulty ethological and psychological truisms used within alternative training systems (Henshall and McGreevy 2014, Warren-Smith and McGreevy 2008). But of course, the scientific approach was de-bunked too – scientists were not real horseman who understood authentic connection, I was told. A demonstration of 'equitation science' based methods, based heavily on learning principles, psychological mechanisms and control of stimuli – left one of my participants deeply unimpressed for its lack of 'feel'.

Amid all of this fragmentation and contestation, when I asked riders about their allegiances during interview, they were very likely to refer to the importance of "being open to different ideas", or of "using a number of different instructors to get different perspectives", or to how "I don't agree with everything he [Parelli] says and does, but I still get a lot from it" and so on. Those who were the most invested in one system or another, through being highly qualified within it, for example, were the *most* likely to make a point of marking out their independence from it and ability to think otherwise. Hence, BHS instructors introduced themselves to me as "but not that BHS-y!", and Jodi was keen to tell me about how much she was able to learn from her traditional dressage coach alongside her alternative education. Riders who did refer to the appeal of a whole system of knowledge *as* a system that could be holistically trusted were likely to be relatively novice, or at least, their statements could well be taken as markers of ignorance, naivety, and lack of horse-sense. The vast majority of my participants, at least some of the time, proudly considered themselves able to dip in and -especially- *out* of different 'systems' rather than commit to one or the other. Most participants shunned and mocked traditionalists *or* alternativists at some times (to different degrees depending on personal

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[23]The difference from the more established equine science is that equitation science aims to study horses within training/riding scenarios, rather than as a species in isolation. The discipline is also distinguishable in its efforts to scientifically interrogate claims made by trainers.

affiliation and social setting), and at other times declared a level of 'open mindedness' that brought them *above and outside of* the split itself. The internet provided websites, forums, blogs and vlogs, as well as groups and pages on Facebook, all of which offered platforms for this sort of active critique, invention, and evaluation. Owners felt responsible for collecting their own personal 'curated assemblages' of information (the phrase is from Sobo et al's study of US parents' use of the internet to make vaccination decisions for their children 2016:538).

While Despret argues that accuracy is the wrong sort of idea for thinking about relatedness (2016:170), in the equestrian environment, subjective descriptions about animals are also treated as 'fact-ish' statements, *begging* critique in terms of accuracy and truth. Equally important, my equestrian participants do not aim for a state of extreme, radical critique which defies the confinement of recognisability as Dave's participants might support. Such critique is a risky practice, Elizabeth Povinelli explains, since it isn't simply about being in opposition to a recognisable norm but being outside of recognisability altogether: "[it] opens the very orders that provide the conditions on which performativity as such depends, leaving subjectivity, referentiality, and world dangling." (2012:460). On the contrary, despite fervent critique and flexibility, participants did not maintain an ambiguous position during interactions with horses. As I will now show, constant 'enclosures' are formed in the 'ontological gambits' (Graeber 2013:232) that riders and trainers make in proclaiming the realities of the training scenarios they are immersed within.

<u>Agility and conviction</u>

The skill of successful horse riders, of either traditional or alternative bent, seemed to be to have a high degree of agility and yet also *specificity* in the way that they could consider relationality with the horse. This involves the light-footed agility to settle on a range of *different* certainties during interactions with horses, rather than a remaining undecided, unrecognisable, vague or ambiguous. Because the horse requires spontaneous and constant responses from the human, ambiguity or doubt is ineffective and ethically problematic, leaving the horse with no clear communication partner at all (more in Chapter Five, see Jones McVey 2017). The *idea* of describing the horse accurately – of closing down the actualities of the encounter - is not rejected on logical or political grounds by equestrians (compared with the imperative not to discuss others' minds among

the Korowai, for example, Stasch 2008). The problem is just doing it well enough. My participants saw it not only as acceptable, but as a matter of responsibility that one *should* be able to know and describe the horse. This regular narrowing is both ethically important in making the horse relatable in a highly precise way, and ethically risky in providing grounds for critique of what could have been seen otherwise.

In two examples below, Bertie offers different ways of framing similar training encounters. It should be no surprise, by this point, that his techniques look a little like traditional and a little like alternative methods, nor that they render the horse something betwixt and between subject and object, nor that each to some extent reconfigures, and to some extent relies upon, concepts of choice, partnership, obedience, kindness, and efficacy. Nonetheless, each can be seen as a temporary closure of possibility, as a fixing on what *sort* of affective relationship Bertie and the horse are mutually immersed within.

> Bertie was trying to get Amber, a young thoroughbred mare, to go through water. He was riding her and using a whip – tapping (or was it sometimes smacking?) on Amber's flank and hindquarters, “To keep the pressure on until she gives the right response.” “She isn't afraid of the water,” Bertie asserted to Amber's watching owner, and the small crowd of friends – all Bertie's students, who had gathered to watch the dispute. “That isn't what this is about. She just won’t be told what to do. She is a very stubborn mare. She has drawn a line in the sand. But she is going to have to learn to be told what to do. She has to learn that she just has to go where she is told. Otherwise she'll know she can get her own way whenever she wants... she will be like this her whole life. Ultimately that's not what she really wants. That's no fun for her. She doesn't want to be getting beaten up her whole life. She just needs to realise how much fun she will have if she just gives in. This is actually the type of horse that loves cross country once they get going.”
>
> Field notes and Dictaphone recording, September 2016.

The philosophising of his training approach betrays the ethical work that Bertie completes in closing possibilities down in the right way. It isn't narrow enough for Bertie to simply describe the relationship as mutually affective or as one of subjective interaction. It's important to Bertie, and other trainers and riders alike, to make more detailed sense of their encounter and to explain how relational ethics are to be configured through it. Here, though Bertie was using a whip, he emphasises that the success of the training endeavour (getting her into the water) is ultimately for her own good – the utility of the exercise is made valuable by its link to concern with Amber's welfare and enjoyment. Amber has a point of view of sorts, though she has to 'learn to be told what to do' via use of a whip –

clearly inappropriate treatment of a human point of view. At times she is described as an example of a certain *type* of creature, a “stubborn mare”, which further establishes how the audience should recognise this encounter. While she might appear some-what like an agent with an intentional mind, the narrative is given with such certainty as to render the description fact-like and objective, seen most clearly in the verbs; “She isn't,” “she won’t,” “she has,” “she will,” “she doesn't”– at no point does Bertie say, “She might”. The instructor knows Amber better than she knows herself: 'Ultimately that's not what she really wants,' he proclaims, and he even knows the way things will pan out in the future for Amber, along one of two paths, depending on the *human's* course of action in this moment. In knowing precisely what sort of subjective partner Amber is in this encounter, she appears as part of an almost mechanically predictable process – an intermediary, in Latour's terms (2005), rather than a mediator.

The same instructor, Bertie, came to find me a few days later to tell me that he had been back to the cross-country course with another horse, Paul, who also didn't want to go in the water. “How did it go?” I asked. He replied, pleased with himself:

> Well, I had said, there's no point forcing him. You can’t force a horse to do anything. It has to be on their terms, so I just said that she should sit there and let him choose. And it took only about 3 minutes, of doing nothing, and not even thinking about the water, just thinking of other things and relaxing and waiting there, and then he just went in on his own. Sometimes you just have to give them a chance, people always think they need to be fighting with them because they are so keen to overcome everything immediately, they have no patience. But you would never have been able to force him in. He had to choose to do it.
>
> Field notes, September 2016.

In order to fully understand the method Bertie describes, I'll add here that this 'choice' would have certainly been supported, for example, by not allowing Paul to turn away from the water, graze, or trot off back to the horse lorry. In some ways, the narrative Bertie provided seemed to present an inverse of the framing that he had used so confidently in Amber's session. While the whip was warranted on Amber because of its *ultimate* kindness, here, the 'kind' approach (of letting him choose, keeping the pressure off) is legitimated primarily because it will *work*, because it gets Paul in the water where fighting with him wouldn't. Here, 'kindness' doesn't carry enough *inherent* value to be worth pursuing without its ultimate efficacy. The horse’s positive choice is centralised,

both for its utility and ethical import (the virtuous rider is compared to those with no patience, who don't give the horse a chance). While it was central to recognise and confront Amber's resistance, moments when Paul could be seen as making a negative choice (while he isn't going in the water) are retrospectively brushed over as moments when he hasn't really finished choosing yet.

My aim is not merely to show the variable political and ethical framings that occur in Bertie's descriptions. Rather, Bertie's two stories are useful in demonstrating the requirement for crystal clear, sharply defined, sorts of 'closure' during interaction. There is nothing vague about the way the concepts of freedom, agency, choice, and kindness are displayed within either account despite the agility between them. Each is highly specific and enables the rider to engage with the horse with (temporary, at least) conviction, giving the encounter highly particular – recognisable – enclosed ethical and relational meanings. Bertie's concern, and those of his peers, isn't to *retain* an openness of uncategorised possibility or flux, when working with the horse, it is to momentarily settle on the right sort of closure; to intricately narrow down the possibilities for ethical meaning and action.

Others who have reported flexibility in the framing of relatedness to animals have highlighted the way this can be a productive technique. Candea (2013) describes scientists moving between 'relational' and 'propositional' knowledge registers during interactions with the animals they study. Shir-Vertesh (2012) describes the 'flexible personhood' of pets in Israel, whose position as family members is vulnerable, for example, when a human baby arrives, and the pet becomes known as an animal other, excluded from shared spaces and possibly even re-homed or abandoned. Both of these accounts, however, speak of a flexibility in the extent to which animals are known along a scale, more or less subjectively or objectively. The flexibility that Bertie demonstrates is rather about moving between different sorts of fixings for what sort of subjective relationship one is involved in. Each is a narrowing, it must necessarily be so in order to be ethically informative in the way that matters.

Closing statements: Different sorts of open

I began this chapter by introducing the idea that ethical epistemology in the equestrian

realm is about independent 'open-minded' thinking, through embodied connection with the horse, often challenging existing norms. I then demonstrated that even 'open-minded' attempts to teach horses and humans relational skills involved a closing of possibilities for free-thinking and for authentic connectedness, recognised by interlocutors through critiques about programmatic interactions. Finally, I showed that a personalised flexibility known as 'learning from the horse' encourages horse riders to critique and deviate from established systems, and so to be somewhat 'open' towards the otherwise. But I also showed that in practice, learning from the horse also requires enclosures of possibility, in the regular sharp descriptions that make ontological gambits about each horse during interactions with it. I'd like to draw towards conclusions by comparing the three sorts of openness referred to throughout this chapter; the open-mindedness valorised by British amateur horse riders, the affective openness of multispecies relationality, and the openness of possibility that emerges through critique.

To some extent, multispecies 'open' and critical openings of possibility can be seen as symbiotic concepts, not least because the multispecies literature positions itself as a critique of normative Western epistemologies and therefore opens a 'possibility to be otherwise'. Both Haraway and Despret argue, that by allowing animals *not* to exist as we expect of them, by allowing them to rework our concepts and surprise us, which is also by recognising the mutual affect we have on one another outside of any pre-existing framework, we might allow our relationships to 'flourish'.

However, the multispecies open and the ethical activist's openings are not necessarily so harmonious; the latter thrives on individuals' ability to *think about* their relatedness from a position of epistemological detachment from societal norms. We might take Candea's concept of epoché (2013) as an example of a form of detachment that could also be seen as enabling critical openness, even though it exemplifies the opposite of the embodied 'openness' of multispecies writing. The scientists he studied learned to hold a state of cultivated doubt about the scientific unknowability of the intentions harboured by animals, despite the fact they also engaged with them at times relationally. We could argue that this state of cultivated doubt – consciously holding on to what is not yet known about animals, or *not determined knowable* about animals, enables a level of openness for them to exist *un*categorised, *un*described and *un*explained. Scepticism can be seen therefore as a form of open relatedness, rather than a detachment and closure from it.

What might be seen as analytical abstract 'distance' can also be seen to enable a degree of freedom, precisely in what *isn't* said, or isn't made say-able.

Along these lines, the multispecies authors' attempts to make particular, specific and (variably) conditional sorts of 'open' relationality into explicit and literal descriptions, can be seen as enacting forms of (en)closure. Haraway recognises The Open (for example) through her dog, Cayenne's improving agility scores (2008:228) and apparently playful behaviours (240-241), Ingold through a particular and unconventional way of perceiving the environment (2006). My argument isn't simply that these accounts restrict possibilities for what is able to *count* as authentic 'open' affectivity through, and despite, their (analytical) arguments for recognising affect (though see Heywood 2018 for a similar argument regarding recursive anthropology.) This argument, while valid, I feel would be unsurprising, particularly to Haraway who is far from naïve about the tragic political predicaments involved in knowing animals at all: “Degrees of freedom indeed” she states, “the open is not comfortable” (2008:75).

Rather, my point is that while these multispecies versions of openness carry similar hallmarks to the value of learning from the horse that my participants described, they do not encompass the ethical practices of knowing horses that my participants demonstrated. The multispecies literature is useful because it is *almost* apposite, it helps to sharpen the understanding of exactly what problems my participants are engaged in. The sort of openness that multispecies literature argues for involves the friction between objective and affective, detached and engaged. This friction doesn't hold the right sort of traction to be so relevant in my field. Rather, the important distinctions relating to managing the 'openness' of riders' minds were twofold: on the one hand, there was an important differentiation to be made and managed between (own) free, clear, and independent thinking compared to (others') epistemological passivity or gullibility. On the other, participants worked to establish and maintain a cutting distinction between getting the horse *right* and getting him *wrong*. It was a *given* that the horse was a subject of *some* sort, the issue was narrowing down *what sort* of subjective and ethical relationship horse and human were entangled within. And narratives *were* narrow, when compared with the playful ambiguities characteristic of the multispecies literature (see Hornborg 2017).

Despret proclaims, 'If we want to gain an access that gives the chance for many more

entities to be active, we need a theory that prevents us from deciding too quickly what is cause and what is effect, what affects and what is affected' (2004:125). She aims to, 'Disclose perplexity...and overcome the distribution between causes and effects, between bodies and minds, worlds and bodies, world and consciousness' (2004:125). Yet for my participants, ascertaining these distinctions was the very substance of ethical relatedness; sorting out the real horse from its representations, its choices from its natures, was of immanent, critical, and continuous import.

For the horse riders I studied, (re) interpretations of the horse, whether in abstract analysis and critique, or in the fixed framings utilised in interactive encounters, often contained both objective-ish *and* subjective-ish thought. Scientistic thought – such as the horsenality grid – provided a resource for some to reconsider the horse and redefine it. It also provided a system from which to deviate, and a resource for de-bunking. These processes of invention, deviation, debunking and reclaiming were ethical epistemological practice.

Generally, then, I find Dave's language of 'openings' more useful than the multispecies scholars' 'open,' as it gives me the opportunity to recognise that openings which were also closures, were ethical epistemological practices, rather than relational failures. However, the covalence between Dave's description of queer activists' enclosures, and mine of equestrians, only goes so far. The equestrians I studied are less radical in the ethical openings they desire, they don't *aim* for expansive scope of possibility, or for radical variety, but for truth and legitimate accomplishment. They *want* closure in giving the horse a knowable and relatable identity of sorts, but they need open-mindedness as a bolster to ensure that the (temporary) closures they arrive at are robust; are really about the horse, not prescribed, not cultish, and not self-serving.

Conclusions

I have presented ethnography in which riders explicitly promote open-mindedness, flexibility and learning from the horse. However, they demonstrate a persistent re-narrowing of what might be considered a legitimate relationship with the horse, a sharp critique of others' attempts at open-mindedness, and a tendency to speak with detail and conviction in constantly explicating exactly what/who each horse is and how he or she should be interpreted and responded to. This could be interpreted as a hypocritical state of

affairs: proclaiming open-mindedness yet practising multiple versions of epistemological fixity. However, I have argued that openings are always inevitably enclosures, and we can therefore look at these practices as particular in the specific ways in which they enact openings and the sorts of closures they seem drawn to (re)create.

The most successful riders (by one another's evaluations), showed an impressive agility in reconfiguring their bids for certainty about each horse and the way it should be related to, including how its choices were to be identified and valued, adjusting the story from one moment to the next, often without a moment of apparent hesitancy in between. They also showed considerable critical skill in relating to the certainties of others, particularly those that looked all-too-certain, too fixed, too generalised, obedient, emotional, fanciful, or convenient. Both of these skills; the agility between framings, and the ethical practice of critique, required an opening – a possibility of otherwise - but also a closing of the mind. It is this version of opening via critique and agility, and crucially, appropriate and *narrow* closing in describing subjectivity in recognisable details, that I take to be central to the prerogative to be open-minded and learn from the horse.

<u>Chapter Three</u>: <u>Bravery, nurture and the narrative construction of selves and others.</u>

Stories happen to people who know how to tell them. Henry James.

Introduction

In Chapters One and Two, I introduced the personal responsibility that horse owners hold for knowing their horses amid a superfluity of choice and an imperative to ground choices in reality. In Chapter Two, I demonstrated how important 'narrow,' exacting definitions about horses are to riders' ethical projects, but also that those definitions are easily and often critiqued. In this chapter, I am particularly concerned with the use of narrative form for constructing and communicating 'narrow' knowledge about the equine other in relation to ethical evaluations of the self, and I will demonstrate that experiences of blurred intersubjectivity can present a problem to be managed.

The ethnographic focus of this chapter is how riders narrate moments of 'resistance' in their horses. The term is in quotation marks because it holds highly specific meaning to equestrians, when compared to its more normal British usage. In moments where the horse/human relationship is malfunctioning, the horse may well be described as 'resistant'. Horses show 'resistance' in a number of dynamic ways. They can jog on the spot in a frenzied sweat, refusing to settle to the walk. They can dig their heels in and decline to move forward, perhaps even reversing at speed into cars, fences and bystanders. They can get the bit between their teeth, cock their head to one side and bolt off, rejecting the rider's attempts to slow them down. They can kick up their back legs in a 'buck', lurch with all four legs off the ground in a 'bronc', or stand upright on their back legs in a 'rear'; all can unseat the rider. While there are connotations of deliberate defiance that can permeate this term in certain usage, it can also describe a less calculated event, a lack of 'softness' on the part of the horse that might come from a bodily discomfort or problematic instinct. Resistance is not just a political term (as it most often features in anthropological discourse, e.g. Scott 2008, Ong 2010) but a material one too. It carries the quality of a resistant material, or an electrical resistance that impedes a free-flowing current of energy, therefore, it describes a tone of movement (braced, tense, sharp). ' Chapter Five considers the tactile techniques involved in 'feeling' and 'working through' subtle signs of resistance, whereas this chapter considers the epistemological work

summoned when the horse behaves really badly, and the rider has to work out what sort of resistance story they are involved in.

The aim of this chapter is to show a dynamic of co-implication between 'care of the self' (Foucault 2010/1984) and narratives made about others. At the same time, I hope to show how two, at times, opposing virtues of bravery and nurture permeate horse riders' experiences of interacting with their horses. When horse riders tell of their experience with horses in a genre which exemplifies their bravery, horses often feature in these narratives as defiant opponents. In contrast, when horse owners narrate their experience in terms of their capacity to provide care, horses often feature as kind and noble victims in need. Notice, the causal relationship may seem back to front here - it is more commonly acceptable (to broader British lay knowledge and horse riders alike) to suggest that once already identified as defiant, the horse *then* requires a brave rider; similarly, that once recognised as ill, the horse then requires sympathy. That is, there is a sensibility to the idea that our ethical decisions surrounding how we should act, and who we should be, ought to follow on from already acquired information about the minds and needs of others. In fact, the reverse relationship might be considered a fault – the idea that understandings of others rest on our own pre-existing needs, identities, or familiar narratives suggests 'projection onto others' rather than authentic connection with them. However, part of my aim here is to reconsider either of these common-sensical dynamics which rely on priority– on what is established first- and to take seriously the possibility that sometimes, the bravery of the rider and the defiance of the horse are co-constructed simultaneously, in triangulation with one another, through narrative. This means that 'bravery' in riders corresponds to 'defiance' in horses, and that 'caring' owners correspond to needy horses. I will show that this level of co-construction seems to present riders with a problem; they work to re-establish a proper priority order, to disassociate their 'feel' for horses' experience from their own emotional state for long enough to know reality. It is the 'problematisation' (Foucault e.g. 1997:117) of knowing self from other that leads me to recognise the value of the figure of the individual for horse people entangled within these deeply relational ethical dynamics. It is only through authenticating the 'real' experiences of horse and human as separate – but related - entities, through a degree of dissociation, that riders consider they can properly relate their ethical actions to the horse. These narratives are not abstract representations, but are interactional phenomena, they are the means through which relatedness with the horse is

experienced and enacted.

In examining the dynamic of relatedness between knowledge about self, knowledge about others, and ethics, this chapter is formed through bringing the later work of Michel Foucault (Foucault 1984 [2010], Laidlaw 2002, 2013, Faubion 2001, 2011), into dialogue with Donna Haraway's elucidation of the interspecies co-construction of selves (2008), via theories of narrative self-construction (Bruner 2003, Frank 1998) and narrative mind-reading (Mattingly 2008, Gallagher and Hutto 2008). The first section ethnographically evidences the importance of the virtue of bravery to my interlocutors and then shows the way that equine defiance is a key part of bravery type narrative plots. In this section. I will also introduce the narrative theory that enables me to investigate the role of genre and narrative form in projects of knowing selves and others. The second ethnographic section shows a different genre of narratives, involving care for the injured or ill equine body. The third section demonstrates the possibility for creativity in narrating horses' minds, and the distress riders feel at times of 'dysnarrativia' (Bruner 2003:223) - that is, the inability to tell one's story, or not knowing which storyline one is living in. To conclude, I reflect on how this particular version of self-other construction compares with the autopoeisis of Foucault and with the 'becoming-with' of Haraway, and I summarise the import of the concept of the individual within the co-constructive dynamics that are evident between my participants and their horses.

Bravery and the narrative of equine defiance

The virtue of bravery

Varied reconsiderations of Aristolenian 'virtue ethics' have been central to the recent reinvigoration of anthropological interest in the moral aspects of human life (MacIntyre 1981, Mahmood 2005, Faubion 2001, 2011, Laidlaw 2002, 2013, Mattingly 2002, Pandian 2009). This involves attending to the diversity of states considered virtuous (intrinsically good) in different contexts, and to the variety of dynamics of evaluation and projects of cultivation undertaken to pursue those virtues.

Bravery is an important virtue among all British horse riders. Their particular aesthetic of bravery is easily associated with a stereotypical 'old-fashioned' Britishness that is a cheery version of war-time resolve, not unlike the scrapes and tussles that the children in Enid

Blyton books get themselves into but jolly-well get themselves out of too. There is something good-spirited and wholesome about the equestrian relation to 'danger' to be triumphed over. Role models, reported in equestrian media (such as Horse and Hound magazine) overcome injury with bravery and positivity. My weekly email news bulletins from Horse and Hound almost always contain some dramatic injury story foregrounding the resolve and resilience of the injured party. Michael Jung, the German Olympic Gold Medallist, and World Champion eventer, became idolised not only for his riding skill, but for the fact he won Burleigh (one of the world's toughest events) in 2015 on his second horse of the day – having broken his ankle that same day falling off the first ride. The extent of the injury wasn't understood until after the event, but this incident was reported both in magazines and in my conversation with participants with admiration, as an example of a true brave horseman, full of ‘grit’ and commitment.

Kirrily Thompson and colleagues describe the British equestrian cultural relation to risk as predominantly 'accepting' (rather than the alternative risk management strategies they suggest of mitigating, deferring, or avoiding risks, 2015). I'd go further than that and say that at times, some of my participants seemed to revel in the physical risk involved in handling and riding horses. This seemed to fit with a general resilience in relation to the rider’s body, displayed – at times - through bodily neglect. Caring for horses is hard physical work, and my participants were proud of the effects this labour had on their bodies, showing off blisters, bruises, chilblains, chapped lips and sun burn, as evidence of their outside, hard working lives and dedication to their horses. Many smoked, didn't eat well, or didn't eat during the day at all when with the horses, some snacking on sweets and shop bought cakes, drinking black coffee or energy drinks to keep them going during their equestrian activities, and remarking on their lack of need for food, warmth, or other comfort, sometimes through reference to those softer types who wouldn't be able to hack it.

Among the 35 or so participants that I got to know particularly well during fieldwork, there were 6 hospital visits as the result of falls during my research year, and multiple minor injuries. Horse riding in the UK is a dangerous sport, with more accidents requiring hospital treatment than motorcycle riding (Chitnavis et al 1997, Silver 2002), and, from my observations, many accidents did not receive the hospital treatment they may have warranted, due to rider stoicism. Sally fell off her unruly horse 28 times within the

preceding year. While explicitly she posited falling as ‘no big deal,’ the celebrated significance of bravery was marked by the fact that she kept count of the falls and told the (increasing) number with a sort of half-pride. This had included a broken wrist, ankle and ribs, and she still continued to ride that horse and to clock up further falls during my fieldwork, though, admittedly, other participants suggested that while they admired her bravery, this had probably crossed the line into being sheer madness. Sally was not an entirely untalented or inexperienced rider, though the general consensus was that she was 'over horsed' with Ben, a young, athletic, sensitive warmblood, which is something she was loathe to admit. Generally, injuries are acknowledged as part of the sport, something which cannot really be wholly avoided, and, furthermore, which certainly doesn't remove one's responsibility to the horse in any way. I was not at all surprised to find one participant in a thigh high plaster cast pushing wheelbarrows, handling horses, and teaching riding, whilst limping around on crutches. A few weeks later, she was back in the saddle well before the doctor recommended it appropriate (which she made sure I knew).

This is not to suggest horse riders wanted to take a totally slapdash or care-free approach to managing risks, far from it, for example, riding without a hat was considered as unprofessional, naive and incompetent as thinking you need a hat for mundane, relatively safe, ground-based tasks. The proper management of risk was part of a personal skill set which demonstrated real horsiness, and this included appropriately cultivating the virtue of bravery. Even when deciding to avoid danger, fear should not feature in the rider’s emotional repertoire or decision making practices, which should embody a proactive initiative to respond to recognised risk with pragmatism and gumption.

One graphic demonstration of the community's pride in their response to danger is the prevalence of injury photographs, including 'selfies' shared by the injured party on Facebook.

Illustration 4 and 5: Photographs shared on facebook of Jess's first aid after a fall, and of Layla (below) after being kicked in the face.

Owners enabled one another to be brave through mitigating risks on each other’s behalf. For example, after Jess's fall (pictured above) other horse owners pitched in to look after

her horse and basically banned her from the yard for a few days, despite – and, enabling – her regular insistence through social media in comments beneath this photograph, that her horse came first, that she didn't need to recuperate, that she was desperate to get back on again.

The ethic and aesthetic of bravery was also observable in the praise given to riders (particularly
children) for their bravery when handling or riding challenging horses, and especially for remounting after a fall (Birke and Brandt 2009:191)– not doing so was really admitting defeat and giving in – both to the horse, and to the fear. Those who were suspected of having 'confidence issues' would be likely to find this problem identified as the central issue of any of their riding troubles. Despite the tangible presence of bravery as a virtue, most of my (largely amateur) participants struggled with 'confidence issues' at some level – whether just a flutter of nerves when they wished they could be calm during a particular riding challenge, or for a notable minority, a debilitating, highly emotional, paralysing fear that prevented them from being able to really enjoy riding much at all. The fascinating thing is that they kept on riding, horsiness was too deep a part of who they were, it was too painfully wrenching to consider a life without horses in it. This became more evident as I got to know participants better, as for some, this was a matter of great embarrassment and guilt.

Ellie explained to me how 'ridiculous' she felt, unable to regain control over her own emotions and body – which shook and quivered and tensed when it should be relaxed - and unable to enjoy the sport which had helped her feel empowered and proud during her childhood and young adult life. She had 'lost her nerve' since having children, which was a commonly given reason for confidence problems. The rationality for this was three-fold. Firstly, time 'out of the saddle' away from horses during pregnancy and infant-care could cause women to lose their connection to horses and re-emerge more of a novice and more likely to be nervous. Secondly, my participants explained that women's own relationship with their bodily safety, and with risk in general, is changed by having children, such that they become more risk-adverse, 'their priorities change' so that the child's dependence on them overrules their ability to 'let go' when riding. Finally, the significant exertion the maternal body undergoes in bearing children leaves them physically weakened, too lacking in 'core stability' to be able to move in as balanced a way on the horse’s back. For

Ellie, her loss of nerve afflicted her to the point that tacking up (getting the horse ready to ride with saddle on etc) left her feeling so shaky and nauseous she was often physically sick before riding. More often, she said sadly, she was finding a reason not to be able to ride at all, such as the weather, lack of time and so on. She hoped her horsey friends hadn't noticed. Others were more forthcoming about their 'confidence issues', and supported one another or garnered support from others pro-actively. Lydia, for example, loudly and theatrically took a homeopathic pill before each ride, the "brave-pants pills" as she called them. "I've got to get a bloody grip! If I'm being a wimp, just shout at me won't you Rosie? Just tell me to kick on and shut the hell up and stop being a wet blanket!"

Rider confidence needs have become a profitable market in the last few years. Services and products on offer include residential courses, hypnotherapy programs, mindfulness approaches, Neurolinguistic programming, therapeutic approaches to teaching riding, 'learning to fall safely' courses, confidence-based books, lecture series and so on. Particular types of horses are seen as most appropriate for nervous riders. Known as "confidence givers", they are usually hairy, thicker set types, but crucially, have unreactive, predictable (and some say "dull") temperaments. Many of my participants found the thought of riding these types of horses embarrassing and associated them with lack of skill. Particularly frustrating and humiliating for riders were situations where their skill set and confidence level did not correlate; where they had to ride at a 'novice' level due to fear rather than lack of talent.

We could analyse bravery as a virtue that riders pursue in line with Foucault's description of 'care of the self' (1986). Ellie, through her tears, evidences ethical self-evaluation. She examines her emotionality and resolve and finds it wanting. She therefore identifies what Foucault calls the "substance" (or ontology) that requires ethical work (Laidlaw 2013:101, Faubion 2011:3). Riders like Ellie then work to improve the ease with which one is able to be brave as an embodied disposition, through finding ways to 'be brave' in the short term (homeopathic pills, encouraging peers, breathing exercises and the like). However, bravery is rarely something that riders experience as a personal problem, so much as a *relationship* malfunction; something which goes wrong between rider and horse. In this respect, confidence issues often emerge as part of a story about a horse. I shall now take a step back from the ethnography momentarily to introduce narrative theory and explain why it is particularly relevant to this field site.

Ethics and narratives

Narratives have long been of interest to anthropologists, though Cheryl Mattingly and Linda Garro (2000:6) recognise an increasing interest in narratives throughout the 1990's, where narratives gave anthropologists opportunities to investigate, 'Life as an unfolding affair, an engagement of actors who very often find themselves in interpretive and practical struggles.' (2000:17). An interest in narrative has proved a valuable tool for anthropologists interested in ethics, as it can demonstrate the ways in which narrators make meaning out of events, the expectations of cultural norms, the variable details that are important in communicating moral plots, and the ways in which narratives can teach, excuse, assign blame, identify and describe relationships, or offer exemplars. (Laidlaw 2013:62 Humphrey 1996, Carrithers 2005, 2013, Mattingly 1998, Zigon 2012). Following an Aristotelian argument that narrative is the form through which people can learn, and exercise, the sensitivities of practical moral judgement (rather than through rational calculation), Alisdair MacIntyre declares, 'Man is a story telling animal' (1981:216) who asks, 'Of what stories do I find myself part?' in order to know, 'What am I to do?'

Narrative has been investigated by Jerome Bruner not only as telling about the self, but as the way in which life is actually lived (2004). Bridging anthropology and cognitive sciences, Bruner argued that selves and stories are so closely interlinked, that it is difficult to work out which enables the other: “Is our sense of selfhood the fons et origio of storytelling, or is it the human gift of narrative that endows selfhood with the shape it has taken?” (2003:211). No autobiography is ever finished, he asserts, only ended, as different threads of meaning might be pulled together in different ways in order to weave a changing understanding of one’s past, present and future connection to events and to others. Investigating the changing role and style of narrative in different historical contexts, Amelie Rorty (1976) demonstrates the way that possibilities for self' are closely tied up with changing forms of autobiography and literary narrative. In this respect, Bruner argues, the invention of the modern novel has had just as monumental an effect on contemporary Western ways of seeing themselves and their world, as the invention of molecular physics (2004:699). This resonates with the way in which Duranti describes language as a “non-neutral medium” (2011:28), that is, the ways in which the form of language mediates the possibilities for human thought, communication and action.

There are some striking similarities between the way Bruner describes self-narration through autobiography and the way Foucault describes self-reflection and care of the self, particular in terms of the relative degrees of freedom/creativity that the subject has to weave a narrative (Bruner) or self-reflect (Foucault), given the available normative 'plots' and grammars, and the idiosyncratic relational and political dynamics that the subject has to work with when communicating with their audience. For example, Bruner describes, "One important way of characterising a culture is by the narrative models it makes available for describing the course of a life"(2004:694). The similarities are highlighted particularly by Arthur Frank, who directly describes self-narratives of hospital patients as a form of Foucauldian care of the self. Frank investigates telling one's own story as a way to forge one's own identity, operating under a degree of freedom within contingent possibilities (1998). However, the extent to which narratives about *others* might be considered a form of self-reflection, or self-care, is perhaps more oblique.

British horse riding as a storied world

The focus on verbal language in this chapter and the next (which deals with metaphor) may seem an odd choice given the current momentum toward attending to the body within multispecies ethnography. However, it is based on observations of the way speech and voice were particularly important concepts to my interlocutors, such that verbality emerged as a central means through which horse/human relationships were experienced and managed. A very common metaphor involved referring to training as a 'conversation' between horse and rider, in which the horse should be 'listening' to the things the rider 'asks'. It's worth pointing out these 'asks' are (mostly) tactile, not verbal, and 'listening' is a bodily posture and mental 'softness,' more relating to the horse being 'engaged' than to any actual aural skill. Tougher or clearer cues might be referred to as 'turning up the volume,' or, 'don't ask, tell!' An instructor might well advise that the student 'finds another way to ask the question' or tries to be more 'encouraging in the way that you ask.'

The stories that horse people most often tell revolve around the intentions of the horse. They usually describe not only what the horse was doing, but why the horse was doing it. This appears to be essential information in the grammar of the moral plots that hold meaning for horse riders, but this need not necessarily be the case. In other contexts intentionality appears less important - or at least less explicit - in establishing 'what happened' (e.g. the South Pacific, Mead 1928, Duranti 1984, Ochs 1982, Rumsey and

Robbins 2008). This only further establish my interest in the particularity of the sorts of co-constructive relationality afforded by narratives which *do* focus so extensively on what Bruner calls the “landscape of consciousness” (1986). Duranti proposes we imagine a continuum along which we might compare the extent to which intentionality is 'hypo-' or 'hyper-cognised' (2015:233-242). This is not quite the same as a measurement of to what extent intentionality exists in people's experience, rather, it is a consideration of to what extent own or others' intentions are made explicit within dialogue or are rendered observable within interaction. Equestrian narratives offer an example in which equine intentionality is 'hyper-cognised' in Duranti's terms. It is in relation to the horse’s intentions that morality is established, that other characters (like human riders) makes sense, that the important ontological details reside.

Telling triumphant narratives

Certain types of equine character (defiant, ridiculous, unreasonable) feature commonly within narratives that enable riders to develop and communicate the virtue of bravery. The narrative below is from Lesley, an estate agent who stabled her horse, Totnes, an ex-racing thoroughbred, next to mine. Lesley used to ride dirt bikes, and prides herself on being as good at car mechanics as any guy. As discussed in Chapter One, Lesley is no 'girly girl'. Lesley is fiercely committed to self-improvement and to competitive success with Tots, though she almost sold him after the first few months of owning him as his behaviour and her confidence deteriorated in parallel with one another. Often she would dismount (get off the horse) in angry tears midway through a ride while unable to control Tots, and would then be very frustrated at herself. However, with the help of the right instructor, she was able to get Tots, and her nerves, simultaneously under control, and this narrative is taken from a couple of months after the turning point in their relationship. It was part of a spontaneous dialogue between Lesley, another rider - Leeanne, and I, while we completed stable chores. Lesley spoke with a loud, cheerful, nonchalance, proud of how much less of a problem her nerves were of late:

> In his first [dressage] test everything was going quite well we were probably three quarters of the way through and we had to do a circle followed by a change of diagonal and I felt like he was pulling through my hands he has always been really hard to have a contact and just doesn't like to be told and now he’s trying to run through his forehand because he is trying to evade the contact again and I was holding him up and I was getting really fed up feeling like I was having to do all the work so as I turned the corner I put my leg on and said, “You will carry me

> and we are going to do this!" and he basically told me to knob off stuck his head in the air like a giraffe and flitted across the arena so someone thought we were going to collide with the arena so we have this funny picture[24] of him bunny hoping across the arena but within 5 minutes I had him back in an outline back under control and we finished the last couple of moves on the test, but yeah he basically just told me to "do one!."
>
> Dictaphone recording, May 2016

Lesley doesn't explicitly talk about her own bravery, and yet, her bravery is evident in the genre of the plot. We can see a clear temporal structure to the plot, there is a beginning (everything was going fine), and then a middle, in which there is a 'jeopardy' which 'calls legitimacy into question'. These are elements Bruner identifies as central to the making of an autobiographical plot (2003: 697, drawing on Burke 1945). The legitimacy questioned here is Lesley's influence over Tots, which is called into question by his lazy and then defiant behaviour. However, there is a happy ending, peace is restored by the steeliness of her resolve. Lesley actually jumps temporally backwards after introducing the scene, to give us more of a back story about Tots' character. She establishes him as evasive in order to bring us along on the same shared script, so that when we get to his resistance, we are ready to see it as both expectable and ridiculous rather than serious or legitimate.

We are given three visual perspectives on Tots leaping across the arena; Lesley's initial description, the person who thinks she will collide, and then the photograph of him 'bunny hopping.' This multiple visualisation adds to the drama of the moment, almost portraying it in slow motion. Lesley manages to communicate that this was a marked and dramatic event. However, she also conveys that it doesn't need to be taken seriously, it can be overcome, it is a laughable effort ('like a giraffe,' and 'bunny hopping', as well as Tots' teenage like attitude: 'knob off!,' he says). Though it might have appeared dramatic, she communicates that this is merely a predictable and silly defiance that she can handle. If there is a moral genre to this story, it is a triumph narrative, in which one can meet adversity with resilience and good humour. The horse, in this moral, provides the adversity by functioning as natural adversary. As she finished her story with a laugh that I somehow felt compelled to share, I affirmed the moral, the humorous genre, and the reading of Tots' defiance as ridiculous as well as inevitable, at the same time as bearing

[24]The show photographer had captured the moment on film, and Lesley had bought the image.

witness to Lesley's bravery.

Stories like Lesley's were particularly common in my fieldwork. All sorts of events could be, and were, described in remarkably similar form or genre. First, the horse's natural defiance creating risk and unbalancing the appropriate horse/human relatedness; subsequently, or implicitly, the rider's bravery, resolve and good humour; and finally, the rider's ultimate triumph. For Bruner, a genre is a specific, 'Set of grammars for producing different story plots' which, 'Commits one to use language in a particular way' (2004:696, Duranti 2011:41). Mattingly and Garro use D'Adrande's term 'schema' (1982) to speak about common genres, or grammars, in which things might make sense in different cultural contexts. They describe, 'Schemas are interpretive processes, integral to the constructive nature of cognition, which mediate our understanding of the world. For both teller and audience, schemas organise the hearing, telling and remembering of stories. Schemas are involved in conveying the specifics of a given story but also supply the narrative structures that characterise stories more generally' (Mattingly and Garro 2000:13).

Narrative-mind reading and self-evaluation

Cheryl Mattingly (2008) investigates narrative mind reading practices carried out by African American mothers of ill children and the hospital staff they interact with. Mattingly demonstrates that narrative mind reading relies on 'shared scripts', that is, on certain accepted and expected patterns of human behaviour in relation to their environment, that provide predictable models on which narrative mind reading attempts can be based. Her particular interest is in the challenges faced when subjects from 'cultural borderlands' do not 'share' the same scripts, and so tell different sorts of narratives about the same events. Unsurprisingly, this leads to misunderstandings and friction. Similarly, my interest in human-horse 'mind-reading' involves people's capacity to understand others across boundaries of difference. However, the specific dynamics of the equestrian relationship demands a subtly different approach. Mattingly could ask both mothers and hospital staff for their narrative version of events, and comment on the discrepancies in genre, form, and moral meaning. I rely upon human narratives of horses but aim to investigate the affordances for co-construction within these accounts. How might the human virtue of bravery *depend upon* horses who can be narrated as defiant? Therefore, while Bruner focuses on autobiographic narrative self, and Mattingly

illuminates narrative mind-reading as a way to understand others (who one can *then* ethically relate to in particular ways), I hold the lens toward the ethical affordances and challenges that come into play when one practises self-evaluation *through* articulating knowledge about the other. This involves a reconsideration of how narratives about others might form part of virtuous self-construction.

For Foucault, ethical self-cultivation depends upon reflective thought. Such thought is:

> What allows one to sept back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and to question as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects on it as a problem.
>
> (1997:117)

This quote seems to invite an image of the ethical subject as necessarily isolated to some extent, as in the phrases James Faubion carefully lays out '*auto*didactic' and '*auto*poeisis' (2011:e.g. 94). However, Faubion also reminds us, relations with others are central and crucial parts of this process (2011:71, 2014:95, also Laidlaw 2013:92-137, 149). Faubion argues for expanding the scope of self-other relationships that Foucault draws on (2011:14), part of his bid to do so involves examining in detail the dynamics of ethical relatedness between charismatic leaders and their followers (2011:80-90). However, there are grounds for focussing more directly on the role of reading others' intentions within projects of self-evaluation. Faubion refers to a 'triangulation' among Foucault's interests: between the care of the self, governance and ethical care of others, and information that others can provide about the self (here, Foucault focuses on parrhesia[25] and pedagogy). Webb Kane describes, 'To become aware you are a "an observable"[26] ...is to find yourself amid other people, imagining their perspective on you." (2015:79). The covalence with Foucault's observations on the power of the panopticon for the development of self-governance is clearly worth noting. I propose that there is a good case for focussing more closely on mind-reading, intention tracking, or other forms of knowing other's minds within a Foucault-inspired interest in subject formation. Even in the example of parrhesia (telling truth to power), one must be able to distinguish the truth-tellers honourable

[25]Parrhesia is a highly specific speech act, involving circumstances in which the speakers is willing to accept significant risk (perhaps to his life) in order to tell a political superior the truth about their conduct, without rhetoric or flattery. (2010/1984:43)

[26]This is Harvey Sacks' phrase (1972)

intentions from those with more complicated, perhaps self-serving reasons for making their case - some degree of mind-reading seems necessary for recognising truth in the eyes of those who speak it, and completing self-evaluation accordingly.

Webb Keane describes the sorts of reflexivity afforded in the way one might acknowledge the other:

> I am not only concerned with my own fact- most of the time I am also committed to yours...The practical dynamics by which one accords recognition to others is inseparable not just from their recognition of oneself but from one's own capacities for self recognition.
>
> (2015:104)

He also explains how a sense of character is essential to this process, 'A great deal of work goes into ethical self-characterisation, which (to a greater or lesser degree) functions in coordination with the characterisation of others' (2015:153). In the context of this ethnographic case, this coordination is enhanced. The import on intentionality and the responsibility individual owners take for cultivating themselves in accordance to their personally known horses, all leads to a particular proclivity to narrate the horse's mind and in so doing, *articulate* the owner's sense of self.

Narratives about the horse's defiance implicitly refer to the rider's bravery, the two phenomena are intrinsically linked through the form of the narrative genre. When she tells us about her horse's defiance, Lesley communicates, and re-instils, her own bravery. This isn't to say equine defiance inevitably makes people brave (though sometimes this too, on which more shortly), rather that one cannot even think about being, or describing in oneself, this particular strain of bravery, without a defiant horse with which to be this type of brave with/against. And one cannot think about describing a defiant horse without opening oneself up to evaluations of bravery. A perfectly well-behaved horse would thwart one's capacity to 'dig deep' and triumph over the opponent. As would a horse who was misbehaving as a confused but willing servant. One's capacity to demonstrate this strain of bravery with the former would be false and staged, and with the latter would be bullying or cruel. Both are criticisms that were made during gossip regarding other riders' attempts at heroics.

This means that it is not only narrative form which gives affordance to particular sorts of ethical projects to become relevant, the horse itself has a part to play. I use the term

'affordance' here in line with Webb Keane (2014, 2015:27-32) who builds on James Gibson's notion. For example, a chair affords the observer the chance to sit, and can therefore be perceived as a sitting-thing (or, equally, as fire wood). Affordances are reliant upon the material properties of a thing, as well as the expectations of those who perceive it. Keane develops the idea into 'ethical affordances', wherein things (objects, others, environments, cognitive capacities) create particular possibilities for the sorts of ethical evaluations and practices which can emerge. Hence, a defiant horse affords a brave rider. A willing but confused horse cannot create, or expose, bravery-triumph in its rider, it simply does not *afford* that project.

The identification of defiance in the horse is also used to instil riders' bravery within riding lessons. Instructors actively and explicitly promote this form of narrative to riders who, they say, need to become braver or develop more grit. We met this pattern in Chapter Two, where instructor Bertie described a horse as 'dominant,' only to explain to me upon reading his words back that the phrase was used rhetorically, to rouse the rider. In Lesley's earlier lessons during the crises phase of her and Tots's relationship, I often heard her instructor telling her that her horse was "laughing at you!" that he was "taking the piss!" and that he knew she was afraid so was able to "get away with whatever he wants!" Determined not to be humiliated, and stirred by the instructors taunting, Lesley would clench her jaw, kick Tetley hard in the ribs and growl "gerrruupppp" at him. Sheer defiance could sometimes out-volume nervous anxiety.

This emphasises the way narratives *do* things within relationships, rather than simply report on them (e.g. Mattingly and Garro 2000:18). This is the aspect of language that Austin called the "perlocutionary effect" (1962:101). Hearing, speaking and embodying the defiance/triumph narrative, is part of the work which riders do in order to cultivate their own bravery, it makes them better at being brave. Therefore, the defiant horse narrative, as tool, might be considered part of the 'ascetics,' or self-forming work, of the Foucauldian ethical project to work on the virtue of bravery (Faubion 2011:4, 45-47, Foucault 1997: 263-266, Laidlaw 2013:103).

Nurture and the horse as noble victim

'He is NOT in pain'

One interesting thing about bravery narratives, is that they often involve at some point the caveats;

'There is nothing wrong with the horse physically,' (the term 'physical problem' is used to refer to

medical issues, physiological problems, pain or discomfort) and/or 'I know he isn't really afraid.' Here, I asked Lesley, who told me about Tots's bunny hopping escapades, to expand on the story she had told me:

> Rosie: Why would he be so stroppy?
> Lesley: Well for a while, well he can - there's nothing wrong with him at all, I know he isn't sore, this is just him - well the last lesson I had with Betty he gets really like grumpy and sour when he's, he thinks he knows what he's doing and then he, he just tends to give the wrong canter lead, that's his little strop, he's like “I'll do it but its begrudging and you might have asked for this one but I am going to give you this [other]one” and the second test he was much better behaved and we got a much better score but he still gave me the wrong canter leg but even when I pulled him back to trot and corrected him he still gave me the wrong leg again so....we're getting there. I just have to be firm and tell him he can't intimidate me.

Lesley had to work harder to reassert the same plot line, that this horse has an unfounded and amusing defiance and resistance to reasonable requests, and that she must be, and is, brave enough and competent enough to overcome it. It is a common 'given' within bravery narratives that horses just *are* stroppy, this is the character they hold within the plot, against which bravery is relevant and virtuous. In asking why he might be, I was unsettling that particular 'shared script' (Mattingly 2008) from functioning – it doesn't serve so well to highlight the virtue of bravery in the face of defiance, when the defiance itself might have a substantial or valid motive. If this were the case, the genre of the story would have changed, and a different type of lead character is required. It is to that plot line that I now turn.

The virtue of responsible, resourceful, care-giving

While the human might find virtue in enduring pain and discomfort, the equine partner's body is

cared for quite differently. Pain, injury, disease and physical ill health, weakness and imbalance are constructed as legitimate reasons for undesirable equine behaviour.[27] If the horse is uncomfortable, then the responsibility for the horse's comfort, and for the consequences of any unwanted behaviour, fall onto the rider/owner. This responsibility is developing in recent times, the horse is increasingly recognised as a somatically complex creature, a growing number of potential pathologies have been identified and met within a growing market of treatments and services. For example, while ten years ago, a good owner would make sure the horse saw the farrier frequently, now it is a minimum requirement of responsible ownership to have the horse's teeth rasped by an equine dental technician every six months, back seen regularly by at least one sort of practitioner (chiropractor, physiotherapist, acupuncture, masseuse), saddle fit checked by professional saddler, and it is common to speak with a nutritionist help line, and so on.

Narratives that riders tell about their horse as injured or ill and in need of care often describe the equine as noble, vulnerable, honest and willing, and the corresponding human as diligent, sympathetic, resourceful and responsible. They often feature the owner's ability to find and disseminate the right information in order to provide appropriate care for the horse. Extensive research and evaluation of information sources are often part of the story of care. Furthermore, they emphasise horse and rider co-operation and shared goals. If it wasn't for the problematic health condition, it is portrayed, the horse and rider would naturally co-exist in a harmonious and conflict free co-operation.

Below, Maggie describes the story of her horse, Trevor's medical condition:

> I was riding, and he was - resistant. And he's not a resistant horse. You know, rather than a typical thing for him, I was in the school, and he was being -he was trying to tell me something was up. So, I was like "Oh he's not right", and I thought maybe it's just a bad day and he'll come back a bit tomorrow then I was away for a week so I said to the girls look after him have him in for a week and

[27]If the horse was interpreted as suffering from 'genuine fear', this too, acted as a legitimate reason for unwanted
behaviour and occurred within a different genre of narrating human/equine connectivity, however, there isn't room
here to extrapolate the discrepancy in participant's interpretations of what did, and didn't count as 'genuine' fear.

> look after him, bute him [give a pain killer], then when I came back I got on, still wasn't right, so I thought OK. Cos I was asking people, I was like “hey come and look” and they would be like, “No can't see nothing, there is nothing.” But I was like, convinced in my head that there is something not right. And then someone said: “Ooo you’re being paranoid Mads, you gotta just ride him through it.” And I was like, maybe I am, maybe I am. So, I hacked him for three weeks in a straight line and he seemed fine, he didn't seem lame or anything like that and we trotted him on the concrete and he seemed fine, and then after the three weeks I got him back in the school and then, he still wasn't right, it was like he was trying to say to me, “Can you please back off me I can’t do it!” So I thought: “Oohhh, I gotta do something” and everyone was still telling me, “no, no, he's not.” But it was just my gut. I know him. So I took him to the Cambridge vet school, I had him booked in for like an assessment as 'poor performance' and they said, “maybe he's done a stifle or a suspensory,” so I was like OK and then they ex rayed him and came back with yep he's got arthritis and bone spavin[28].
>
> Dictaphone recording, May 2017

Maggie went on to tell me about the various treatments she had researched and provided for Trevor, special remedial shoes, physiotherapy, feed supplements, saddle fit changes, and so on. While Maggie was talking about the stages of diagnosis and recovery from Trevor's disease, she was also able to communicate her ability to seek the right information, her shrewdness in handling suggestions of others, and her trust of Trevor, as well as her trustworthiness for him. Maggie's narrative involves 'jeopardy' in the form of Trevor's need for care testing Maggie’s ability to recognise that need and respond appropriately to it. She describes the tension between horse and rider very differently from Lesley, though the scenarios are substantively similar – both horses put up resistance against being told what to do. In Maggie’s narrative, though, she reminds us repeatedly that Trevor isn't really resistant, that he is sweet and well meaning, and she shows the interaction to be a matter of miscommunication, an error on her part which she has since identified and can confirm (through the affirmation of the veterinary diagnosis) that Trevor is, in fact, a sweet horse, as she had always thought. Notice the description of the equine resistance is vague in this account – we don't really know what he actually did in the school. While for Lesley, Tots's dramatic actions were emphasised three-fold as they served a key role in demonstrating her bravery within the plot of triumph, here, Trevor's communicative intentions are much more important than his actions, the jeopardy comes in the possibility that the medical problem will not be uncovered, in the plot whose moral might be surmised, “trust your horse.” In highlighting the way these narratives give form

[28]Bone spavin is actually the old equestrian term for the condition medically diagnosed as arthritis of the lower hock (hind leg joint), Maggie had understood the diagnoses to be of two conditions, rather than two names for one.

to experience, it is significant that I never heard one story about a horse who was both defiant by nature *and* in pain, nor of one who was healthy, comfortable, and *legitimately resistant*. Some people and their horses were more likely to inhabit one of the narratives, some were more likely to inhabit the other, and some oscillated between the two at different times, or struggled to know which story they were in.

Creativity and Crises

Living the wrong story

Diagnosis of a physical problem can be a monumental, game changing, and emotional event for a horse owner. Jess features in the injury photographs above. Jess and Prince seemed to have a good relationship, in which she took the utmost care over Prince's well-being, and he seemed, to the best of my knowledge and to the agreement of all around us, to be very fond of her. Prince was a large part of Jess's ability to handle her mental health, having suffered with depression in the past, she found solace in riding and spending time with Prince, whom she had owned for 6 years. He came to her call in the field, and whinnied at her from the stable. Of all of my participants, Jess had the highest and most careful standards in relation to the care of Prince's body, grooming him until his coat shone (during which he would doze with his eyes half closed), giving him a deep and scrupulously clean straw bed, cleaning out his water bucket thoroughly (even constructing a little ladder for the mice that sometimes drowned in it so they could get out again). Jess enjoyed mixing Prince’s feeds up, oiling his hooves, filling his hay nets up to bulging full, and making sure he always had on the right thickness of rug (blanket) for the exact weather predictions from his abundant ‘wardrobe’ of options.

However, throughout the first half of my fieldwork, Jess occasionally struggled with Prince's tendency to “put in a dirty stop” - which means to stop at the very last second before taking off for a jump, often unseating the rider who has prepared themselves for the forward momentum. It is a particularly unlike-able behaviour in horses, and generally seen as dishonest. Gradually, the dirty-stop issue became more of a problem in their otherwise harmonious relationship, while it was always unpredictable and defied many attempts at spotting patterns in its occurrence, it seemed to be happening more often, and it seemed to bother Jess more. Where once she had suggested she might give up jumping if Prince didn't like it, in Spring of 2016, she seemed certain that ironing out this problem was an essential part of achieving a fulfilling equestrian relationship. Presuming her

growing nervousness to be part of the problem (the more she fell, the more nervous she grew, the more he stopped, so that she felt she was 'letting him down') Jess asked a braver and firmer rider to compete Prince on her behalf. For a while this worked, though the rider had to use the whip at every fence to guarantee a jumping effort from Prince– a fact Jess could square away as appropriate 'encouragement,' though she told me she didn't feel she would have been able to use the whip herself – part because she would have felt guilty and part because she would have worried Prince might have bucked her off if she did. One day, though, Prince wouldn't jump at all, even for the braver rider, and the group came home frustrated at his defiance. “Why is he such a fucking dick-head?!” One of the other riders exclaimed. “Why does he just refuse to even try?! Jess really deserves better from him.”

Though Jess got Prince's back checked regularly by a horse masseuse, she decided to get a second opinion, and this second practitioner recommended a veterinary assessment and possibly ex-rays, on account of some 'tension' she found behind the saddle area. I arrived at the yard one day to find Jess tear stained and pale, hugging Prince around the neck. Placing a hand on Jess's shoulder, and another over Princes neck, I found out what had happened. The vet had ex-rayed and diagnosed kissing spines[29]. Everything had changed. The possibility that Prince may have been in pain, even when not misbehaving, filled Jess with guilt and forced a re-conception of the narrative of their past relationship and riding experiences together, while at the same time, the medical cause of his misdemeanours gave her a sense of relief – suddenly, it all made sense, his character was restored, but hers was called into question in a new way. At least it wasn’t ‘her fault’ because it wasn’t her nerves that were causing the problem after all, but she should have trusted him, she told me. He was obviously trying to tell her that he was hurting and she hadn’t listened. Now she had what felt like a tremendous task ahead of her, to try to build and shape his body, changing his posture to improve the condition. The whole summer of riding plans she had made had to be scrapped and a new plan made, involving physiotherapy exercises without any weight on his back. She needed information, from vets, from the internet, from others who had worked through it. The corresponding ethical rider-self to Prince's

[29]A condition where the boney protrusions of the horses' vertebrae are too close together, touching one another, or catching soft tissue between (Jeffcoat 1980). It is significant that kissing spines is invisible from the outside, other than behavioural symptoms, and that it was discovered in the 1980s and its diagnoses (by ex-ray) has been prolific in the last decade.

kissing spines self was a care-giving, information seeking one. It was an emotional day for Jess, who seemed to realise she had been living in the wrong story, and had to adjust to this new one, in which her behaviour and Prince's corresponded to each other in a totally different way.

<u>Decision events and co-construction</u>

Jess's story highlights both the relationality of this narrative form of ethical self-evaluation, and yet also the way the narrator is held personally responsible for that knowing. To explain this further, I turn to Caroline Humphrey's notion of the 'decision event.' Humphrey's decision event enables the recognition of an intelligible subject that exists before and after significant changes in the composition of the self (2008:370). Humphrey shows that the term can accommodate the sorts of multiple and fragmented understandings of subjectivity that are utilised in Mongolia. When an event occurs, during which the constitution of the subject is changed, yet one considers an identifiable element of the subject endures before and after that shift in self-constitution, then we might consider that shift a decision event, Humphrey contends. Decision events need not be as considered and cerebral as the turn 'decision' suggests, in fact, they may involve shock, dreams, the impact of war, or a divination event (2008:363-364). They do not only happen 'to' people, they have to be, to some extent 'plumped for' or 'taken up' in a particular way so that they resonate with the way the subject is self-intelligible.

Analysing Prince's diagnoses as a decision event, that happens to and with Jess - that she 'plumps for' - allows us to recognise the relationality of Jess's sense of self. Jess before the diagnoses features as not-brave-enough in relation to the increasingly defiant Prince, and Jess after the diagnoses as not-yet-caring-enough in relation to the trustworthy and needy Prince. However, the idea of the decision event also enables us to recognise the way in which Jess – Prince's ongoing owner – is held responsible across these two narratives, in an enduring way, for knowing which narrative she should have been in.

The ethnography provided to this point demonstrates a dynamic of co-construction of horse and rider, we have seen that equine bodies and behaviours have particular affordances for who their riders can be. This multispecies co-construction has been emphasised by recent anthropological interest in human-animal relationships. For example, Leslie Irvine who utilises ethnographic data of rescue dogs interacting with

potential adoptees, and demonstrates the 'contingency' of human and canine self-hood upon one another (2008:106-125). Feminist science studies scholar Karen Barad's notion of 'intra-action' has been highly influential: rather than the more usual phrase, *inte*raction, Barad asserts the way entities co-construct one another, such that 'the partners do not precede the relating' (2003:812). Donna Haraway, whom I introduced in the previous chapter, highlights the co-construction of humans alongside 'companion species' in a 'meshwork' of 'becoming-with' (2008: throughout, e.g. 3, 4, 19). In contrast with Foucauldian autopoeisis already introduced in this chapter, Haraway's account emphasises the fallibility of any human ability to really know oneself in relation to one's environment, let alone to self-construct. The figment of a bounded, knowing, human self appears in Haraway's account as an odd, over-celebrated, outdated, and in many ways, damaging invention of the enlightenment (2008:9-11,12). However, she does less to offer us a means of observing the varied ways in which human ethical practices actually occur within this gargantuan network, than she does to tell us how they should. My interest is to investigate the creativity with which my participants attempted to manage these deeply co-constructive dynamics, and the recognised risks that this capacity for creativity invokes.

Contested stories

So far, we have seen that a different narrative genre constructs horses who are ridiculous and defiant, and those who are legitimate and in pain. Within these genres, different affordances for the character of the rider, and its ethical evaluation, are made. This means that describing one's horse as defiant enables a person to invest in their own bravery, while describing a horse as in pain enables them to explore their capacity to care. The potential for creativity here, in describing the horse in line with the type of 'corresponding self' one is able or willing to offer, did not escape my participant's notice: they were often suspicious and critical of one another's narratives. One example is the case of Naomi and Blitz, who featured on the fringes of my fieldwork. While I spoke with Naomi occasionally about Blitz during my fieldwork year, I was able to follow their story more frequently through the reports of several of my regular participants who knew them well and discussed their predicament amongst themselves often.

Naomi, they felt, was over-horsed with Blitz, mainly due to her own confidence issues, she couldn't ride well enough to handle his particularly wilful nature, and she had become

more afraid of him following a series of falls and near-falls. According to my regular participants, while Naomi at times admitted her confidence was an issue, she didn't recognise the centrality of her confidence issues in the story of Blitz's problematic behaviour, instead, believing there to be physical problems causing his escapades. She didn't recognise what others saw as self-evident; that her fear was causing the issues, rather than only caused by them. Every time I met with Naomi, she offered a story which followed a similar form. Typically, it would emphasise progress, speaking from a position of hindsight, Nicola would string events together to show that finally, they had been able to identify the root (medical) cause, and now treatment had begun and things were looking better; he had improved. However, other participants didn't buy it. They noted that she left out key events, when his behaviour was not good despite the malady apparently receiving treatment. When the treatment du jour eventually was acknowledged as failing, Naomi would move on to another possible root cause; a new back specialist, tack changes, feeding issues, a need for calming herbs. She would be able to synthesise a sensible narrative around this new explanation, as well as see an 'improvement' upon treatment, that others didn't recognise. This constant search for the 'real reason' for his bad behaviour was seen by others as her inability to accept the truth of the story between them and the truth about her own role in their relationship: She was afraid of him and unable to handle him, he would be better off with a more competent, braver rider, and she would be better off with a more steady, predictable, horse.

When Naomi received a veterinary diagnosis of stomach ulcers for Blitz, I wondered whether the nay-sayers would accept that there really had been a problem and that Naomi had been correct to continue trying to tell the story in terms of Blitz's physiological needs, 'plumping for' his need for care, rather than her need for bravery. However, no such change in attitude occurred. “You can't really tell whether or not stomach ulcers are actually painful, anyway,” participants told me, “So a gastroscopy proves nothing.” Besides, they argued, it doesn't explain why he has sometimes behaved fine. Furthermore, he didn't really seem to improve substantively once he received treatment, which proved the ulcers never really were to cause of his behaviour (a point that Naomi explained in a different way, sometimes as 'learned patterns of pain behaviour', and sometimes as evidence that his stomach was still hurting him and required further treatments and investigations). Therefore, Naomi and Blitz's case shows the possible space for creativity in narrating horses' physiological conditions. One doesn't have to 'side' with either Naomi

or her commentators to see that Blitz's story could be told in ways which afford totally different evaluations of the rider.

During one lengthy discussion with Bertie (riding instructor) while out riding, we considered the way riders interpret their horses and recognise pain. “People who want to find a problem, will always be able to find it eventually.” He told me, “If you ex-ray the whole body of any horse you will find something to pin it all on. Otherwise then you find it with a psychic, or a chiropractor. There is always something there if you want to find it. And those who can’t be bothered to get into dealing with veterinary stuff can always explain pain responses away as just behavioural.”

Dysnarrativia – inability to narrate

It isn't acceptable for riders to simply invent the horse as you would have the horse be, but it isn't always easy for participants to know, authentically, which story they are living in. One's intuition, or 'gut instinct,' for reading one’s horse and knowing his/her needs, is often celebrated once proved right in hindsight. However, many participants clearly experienced difficulty in evaluating and responding to 'pangs' of gut instinct that 'something is wrong'. The problem was that riders couldn't be sure whether their 'gut feeling' was coming from a genuine connection with the horse, or whether it was coming from their own fearfulness. This 'blurring' of felt boundaries caused problems. They didn't know whether to work on the 'alarm bells' that were ringing by developing their own bravery and grit, pushing through with stoicism and resilience, or whether they ought to be listening carefully and thoroughly to the possibility that something might be legitimately wrong. Because they couldn't tell self from other in their feeling of unease ('is it coming from me or him?'), they couldn't tell what sort of self was valuable, they couldn't work out the plot.

Here is Lesley talking about Tots again, in more of an unsure moment:

> Sometimes I think he is better on the [herbal] calmer. I think, that it's the changes in the grass that make the calmer work or not work. And I think the weather, he hates the wind. But then sometimes I think it is all in my head. It’s the psychology of it. I am just worrying, because I am worrying. Maybe I am just avoiding riding in the wind because then I am scared. So then I'm gonna do it because I'm not one to be beaten. But maybe I am scared because I know, deep down, that he isn't right, that something isn't right. Maybe the calmer is what he needs or maybe it’s masking something more important. Or maybe it is doing nothing at all and I am

seeing it how I want to see it.

Dictaphone recording, October 2015

This can present something like a crisis in terms of rider's ability to know how to evaluate themselves in correspondence with their enigmatic horses, which was seen in participants' almost desperate attempts to narrate events that seemed to refuse to string together in a meaningful way. This is evident in the account given by Jane, below, shortly after being bucked off her recently backed[30] youngster, Rose. She had remounted and finished the lesson, visibly shaken up, and then I had asked her what she thought had happened. We were accompanied by Jane's instructor, Anne, whom I had been shadowing.

> I don't know. Well, it wasn't like last time. Up 'til that night she hadn't really, she hadn't put a foot wrong at all, she was quite dozy wasn't she? well not dozy but she was kind of like, "Yeah yeah I'll do this and I'll do it and we do it and then it's all rosy in the garden and then I go out." I knew I'd had a problem with her that first night because she'd gone over there, the grass was this high [gesturing to waist height]and I knew she wouldn't want to come in and she literally, she didn't even wanna come in and then she kicked shit out the stable, which is so unlike her isn't it? I mean this is Rose 99% of the time you can leave her there while you ran to the toilet and when you came back she would still be there because she doesn't see the point in moving normally if there is hay it's just, "Oh I'll just eat hay," but literally, I just brought her in – and she was, she was trying to kick me, she was out for [pause]revenge almost, not really but - and I had her out there circling and in the end I got a hard hat, and I've never use a hart hat, not to handle 'em, I'm not generally worried, but -and in the end I put a hard hat on I thought I'm just never gonna get the bridle on when I'm, you know, it's gonna take two of us to do it, and she wasn't that horrendous actually she bronced once, didn't she but she didn't dump me but a lot of time it was like "ooh what's going on? I know I'm good mannered so I'm trying to listen but I'm just a little bit" – you know - "but yes I'm listening." Like I say I did it twice after that and the other day, that other day, she was just superb and I jumped on an – but then that *other* day we couldn't even mount properly without turning her that way now, and nothing was different, we just, well you just get on, but she's still trying, but it's just this... I don't know where it comes from either it's almost, I don't know whether it's – "piss off I don't want to do it", or what, because it's not regular, like he [gesturing to her other horse] was doing it regularly and then he's got a bad back and I didn't know it at the time, so he was doing it out of that but he didn't bronc[31], he just bucked I think because it's painful for him. She just has this thing of – not always – but she can – but she isn't ----- " [Jane stops speaking at this point for several seconds and then Anne interjects]

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[30]Started ridden training

[31]Bronced – a movement where the horse lifts all four feel off the floor, the front legs raised higher, and the head down low between the knees- characteristic of rodeo. A buck, in comparison, is where the hind legs are thrown up so that the horses tail is it's highest point. Both can unseat the rider, depending on their severity.

Dictaphone recording, July 2016.

It seems as though Jane is struggling to know how to describe the day's events in terms of a narrative that includes meaningful links to other events in the past and plans for progress for the future. Particularly striking, in comparison with Lesley's bravery narrative at the beginning of the text, is the lack of temporal structure – there is a beginning, but no clear middle and end, it is hard to know what this story is even about, and the characters of both Rose and Jane, don't make much coherent sense. This is a fundamentally different sort of moral dilemma than the problem of navigating value pluralism (Robbins 2013), or clashing projects of self-cultivation (Laidlaw 2013:165) or knowing how to achieve 'best good' within a complex 'primal scene' of messy, moral encounters (e.g. Mattingly 2014). This is not about the problem, "What should I do?" when faced with a confusing and tragic predicament; this is the problem, "What predicament am I in?" Jane works to establish: Who is Rose? What did we do to one another? What were, and are, her intentions? With this knowledge, the dilemma would be made ethically manageable, in one way or another. Bravery follows on as though natural from discoveries of equine defiance, care corresponds effortlessly to recognitions of equine pain. Establishing the reality is the primal problem. Jane's predicament may constitute a state Bruner calls "dysnarrativia": "a severe impairment in the ability to tell or understand stories," which correlates with, "an almost complete loss of the ability to read others' minds" (2003:86).

Keane overviews research amongst cognitive development scientists that demonstrates not only the importance of knowing the other in order to know the self, but also, the importance of being able to separate other *from* self in order to operate well in social dynamics (Keane 2015:80-81. However, this skill has been documented as a developmental stage in children, rather than ethnographically as a problem to be grappled with within the ethical lives of adults. Within the multispecies literature, a recognition of the blurring of self/other boundaries is generally portrayed in ethically positive terms, as though acknowledging intra-activity will likely naturally lead to better attunement (note, the same link between establishing the *truth* of the relationship and then the apparently naturally co-occurring virtue).

Jane didn't actually manage to describe what *had* happened on the day I was watching,

and in the session I had asked about, at all. She tries to give some history but it won't link up meaningfully to the present. There is no real 'moral' to the confused ramblings she offers, Rose doesn't really make sense as a character in the plot, and Rose's relation to Jane is unclear. Particularly because narratives about horses' minds are so ethically important in this setting, the state of dysnarrativia that Jane exemplifies is also an embodied state, accompanied by guilt, anxiety, confusion and unease. Somebody trying to work out the plot they are in, is likely to be preoccupied with internal dialogue, holding a weak, small, slumped and defeated posture. As we will see in Chapter Five (and Jones McVey 2017) horses do not tend to respond well to this sort of 'overthinking' (as it is known), which is why, as in Jane's case, such speculation often takes place away from the horse, once dismounted. In this case, Anne, the instructor, stepped in and offered a clearer story, one in which Rose is actually quite stubborn and defiant as a natural temperament, evidenced by her responses to particular parts of the training that day. This was a story in which Jane and Anne together would be capable of dealing with her wilfulness. Jane seemed relieved, and retold the series of events as per Anne's story several times before I left, though she told the story again quite differently the next time we met, several months down the line, when she had identified regularity of riding as the (currently) real problem, any hint of Rose's stubborn temperament had been forgotten.

Narrative as a way of living together

This leads me to comment on the different roles that listeners can play in story-telling accounts. There seemed to be a scale of involvement: at one end, as in Maggie and Trevor's case, stories seem told to proclaim an already settled account, the listener is required only to hear it, and perhaps to sympathise with it. Some accounts, like that of Lesley and Tots' bravery/defiance, the speaker seems to be seeking affirmation or confirmation from the listener, they seem to want the listener to actively confirm that the story and its moral are good and true. When this doesn't happen, these speakers can show remarkable flexibility in 'going with' an alternate telling. Sometimes, the speaker needs more help from listeners, and might invite them to take a part in the story telling process, as with Jane and Rose, here. These accounts can seem to sweep widely and can be disorientating to listen to, as the speaker can move from snippets in which the horse would never hurt them, to moments where the horse is fundamentally dangerous, from moments when they are co-operative allies who had a misunderstanding, to moments where they are automatically and always at odds. In these sweeping, searching accounts,

listeners (myself included) seem drawn to help the speaker to form a more coherent narrative, to string events together around a meaningful moral, with characters who relate to one another in understandable ways, and who have particular roles to fill in the narrative plot. Jarret Zigon describes these co-authored narratives as, 'the intersubjective struggle to live through a moral breakdown together' (2012:205). This is not to suggest the flexibility is unbounded, riders have some enduring beliefs about their horses' temperaments, the nature of horse instinct, character, and cognitive abilities, and the proper virtues that should be shown by owners; and some of these beliefs are less flexible than others.

It is worth re-asserting that the stakes are high, and that these narratives are ways of living together rather than mere abstract representations. Had Jane continued to be unable to narrate Rose's behaviours, unable to find a recognisable plot which linked horse to human in a meaningful way, Rose’s future as relatable creature would be precarious. Such horses were considered dangerously 'unhinged' and mad, or they may be regarded as an unsolved mystery. Either way, they were likely to find themselves either becoming 'field ornaments' (living out at grass with little or no human interaction), sold (considered the least responsible option) or 'put to sleep' (euthanised). I would suggest on this evidence that un-narratable relations are not feasible relations at all.

Conclusions: Co-construction or autopoiesis?

In some ways, this chapter confirms Haraway's assertion of a dynamic of co-construction that is beyond the capacity of the individual human to know or construct themselves. After all, I have shown that horse riders struggle to know the impacts of their own creativity, and the sources of their own intuitions (‘Is it all in my head?’) I have also shown that riders are dependent – in terms of who they can be, and how they can self-evaluate - upon the affordances of their non-human companions, as well as the affordances of the genres of knowledge available to them, and the audiences they co-narrate with. However, the figure of the individual is critical here twofold: On the first level, the 'meshwork' of multispecies co-becomings is constantly sorted and organised, when narrators 'plump for' particular bounded characters, with personal intentions, responsibilities, and moral meanings manifested within ethically informative plots. Distinction and differentiation between individuals (and species), is the very stuff of these ethical narratives. On the second level, the horse owner-cum-narrator holds personal

responsibility to know others (and so, self) properly. They are responsible not just based upon what they know, and on what their good intentions are, but also for what they *should have known*. The sort of moral 'jeopardy' and 'trouble' (Kenneth Burke 1945, see Bruner 1990:152) that occurs in what one *could have known* about others is a factor of the relationship between the individual and the other characters, within a plot. This is the genre of plot which describes the tragedy of Oedipus' relations with Jocasta, whom he *could have* known was his mother, but didn't. This sort of morality is intrinsically relational, it takes place between characters, and it encourages individuals to relate better, to look out, rather than in, to know others, in order to know the self. Nonetheless, it requires the figure of the bounded individual, the subject who needs to be known, and the subject with whom this epistemological responsibility rests. These figures of the somewhat-bounded individual -within plots, *and* narrating plots -are part of the mechanics through which ethical interspecies co-construction occurs in British equestrianism.

It might be noted that when boundaries between selves and others seem most 'blurred' and muddled, for example, in Lesley's questioning of her own gut feeling ("maybe I am just avoiding the wind because I am scared?") and in Jane's messy and fragmented narrative, these are also the times when Foucauldian 'problematisation' occurs most clearly. Jane and Lesley attempt to analyse and make sense of their self in relation to their environment deliberatively, they try to sort out the feeling of blurring and work out how distinct individuals might relate to one another in a meaningful plot of corresponding motives. I mention this to show that definitive instances of abstract self-consideration, and experiences congruent with Haraway's blurred becoming-with, need not be mutually exclusive, in fact, they are sometimes concurrent phenomena. While Foucault emphasises self-construction and Haraway co-construction and intra-action, their arguments do not necessarily conflict. They are engaging in 'cross talk,' Haraway is invested in the entangled meshworks critters live within, Foucault (and following him, Laidlaw, and Faubion) are interested in the way humans are free-*enough* to reflect on the contexts they exist within and evaluate how they want to live.

To some extent it stretches Foucault's description of care of the self to so centralise narratives about others. Where Foucault refers repeatedly to self-evaluation, and self-cultivation, the accounts I have featured which seem to operate more easily in narrative

form, such as Lesley's earlier story of overcoming Tots' bunny hoping escapades, do not explicitly feature the self – are not ostensibly *about* the self at all. In fact, according to riders, these narratives should *not* be self-forming events in their first instance, they should be constructed about the horse in isolation, and then provide information on which ethical responses can be based. Yet the creative freedom involved in setting the terms by which the self will be evaluated seems exactly the sort of freedom within discursive contexts that Foucault refers to. It is unclear, then, whether, or to what extent narratives about others might be considered examples of Foucauldian reflexive thought. One resolution is to refer to Laidlaw's explication of problematisation. 'Problematisation is not the name of distinct episodes of events...For any period or milieu, in any text or discourse, one should look for what it is that is problematised, for what is the subject of concern, reflection, and uncertainty, and for the forms which that concern and reflection take. Something always will be problematised in that sense, and the key to understanding a form of life lies in its precise delineation' (2013:118). This is helpful because it takes us away from looking for problematisation in particular moments of considered self-reflection as a special type of mental action, and locates it, rather, as the evaluative problem which concerns individuals within historical contexts, whatever form that concern takes. We can certainly see narratives problematised; we can see that a key concern among British horse riders, is how to narrate their horse well. This is the problem at the heart of dilemmas like Jane's as she scrabbles to make her encounter with Rose sensible, reasonable, ethically relatable. However, the contingency to evaluations of selves and others is also visible in that human bravery is problematised, and human care-giving is problematised – raised as a matter of ethical concern - through the narratives I have demonstrated that are ostensibly *about* horses. This suggests narratives about others can function as a means of reflexively, creatively, considering and constructing the self, such that knowing others might be considered a form of care of the self.

The particular aspect of epistemological responsibility that this chapter has developed in contribution to the wider thesis is the importance of knowing self from other in order to create ethically informative narrative plots. Riders work to know who their horse is, as though he was a separate and integral entity, in order to know how they ethically relate to him, precisely because human and equine are so tightly co-constructed. The figure of the intentional individual holds particular sway within these co-constructive dynamics, both in the construction of characters with moral meaning within stories that are told, and in

the ethical responsibility held by individuals to tell those stories well.

Chapter Four: Infantilization, reflexivity and language ideology

Introduction

This chapter investigates infantilization; instances where horses are described like human children. While the previous chapters demonstrated an environment of critique and the search for true knowledge about the horse, this chapter deals with the puzzling issue of how, why, and when, people might choose to describe the horse in non-real terms, that is, terms which deal in some sort of fiction. I will investigate three different forms of infantilization which employ non-real registers of knowledge in different ways. I will show a trend towards meta-linguistic reflexivity, and the conflict between this and other ways of speaking not-real. First, I shall introduce anthropomorphism, and infantilization as ethnographic objects within my field site, and situate my approach in line with others who have used language ideology as a means to investigate metacognition (thinking about thinking) and ethics.

Anthropomorphism

The term anthropomorphism refers to instances where non-human entities (gods, animals, objects) are described in human-like terms or related to in human-like ways. However, the definition of what *counts* as 'anthropomorphic' in different times and places is a contingent phenomenon (Knoll 2011). 'Anthropomorphism' becomes employed in different ways as the distinction between human and animal is performed and produced for various means and under various logics and values. This is evidenced, for example, in Lorraine Daston's examination of the different sorts of 'anthropomorphic' risks that were managed by medieval angelologists, compared to those that faced eighteenth and nineteenth century comparative psychologists (2005). We can see the term 'anthropomorphism' as policing two sorts of boundary, on the one hand, that between human and non-human, and on the other, that between symbol and reality. The work done by the concept of 'anthropomorphism' is an ideal example of what Latour calls the modern work of 'purification' (1991). Any identification of anthropomorphism usually also devalues such a knowledge item as inferior to literal, accurate forms of knowledge. Since anthropomorphism describes knowledge about the non-human as parasitic upon understandings of human attributes, the concept holds traction through revealing

descriptions which are, after all, 'only metaphor'.

Most of my participants were familiar with the term 'anthropomorphism,' and all of them regularly employed the concept (if not the term) when policing other's treatment of horses considered too human-like. There was absolutely no internal contestation to the idea that horses were persons in as much as they had individual characters, impressive intraspecies and interspecies communicative capacities, complicated social lives and social motivations for their behaviours, deep and complex emotional experiences, and the ability to learn, remember, improvise and estimate. However, there were disagreements over precisely where the difference between human personhood and equine personhood lay, for example, were horses capable of jealousy? Did they really enjoy being clothed in warm blankets, or would they prefer to be in touch with the elements (Hurn 2011)? Infantilization was one of the most prolific forms of anthropomorphism I witnessed, and the most internally critiqued. Almost all of my participants referred to themselves as their horse's 'mum' or 'dad' at some point, gave them child-like voices when speaking on their behalf at times, and seemed to actively 'baby' them in the way they offered care. However, they also censored these activities carefully, carried them out with a degree of irony, with caveats, or with defensiveness, and were critical of those they considered to be treating their horses too much as children when they ought to be treated as horses. The particular concerns surrounding infantilization in my field site were related either to animal welfare (that horses would not be properly looked after if they were treated like children), or to proper control (that animals would become spoiled and unruly if treated like children), and always also emphasised the risk to personal virtue, that one might be foolish, disconnected from the 'real' horse, ignorant, over-emotional, and/or self-serving.

<u>The demotion of metaphor</u>

The boundaries of human/non-human and thought/reality, on which the concept of anthropomorphism rests, have been destabilised in recent moves within anthropology to 'bring the animal in' and to acknowledge radically different ways of relating to the world. For example, Eduardo Vivieros de Castro (1998) argues that we should not presume claims of non-human personhood are necessarily metaphorical (see also Nadasdy 2007). Such a presumption of metaphor, he argues, rests on an anthropocentrism that holds personhood as a human-only quality, and furthermore, it relies upon a multicultural, uninatural model in which thought is considered ontologically distinct (and varied) from

world (which is singular). Different approaches to overcoming the anthropocentrism, eurocentrism and modernism associated with concerns about anthropomorphism include Tim Ingold's argument that 'lively' agency can be perceived in the environment, rather than applied *to* it from a symbolic realm (2000, 2006, 2008), and Kay Milton's argument that observations of person-like qualities in animals are 'egomorphic' – that is, demonstrate a recognition of something like the self in the other, rather than 'anthropomorphic' – centred around the speciesist concern of attributing *human* likeness (2005). A consensus among these authors, and more, seems to suggest that too much has been made of the way humans construct non-humans symbolically, rather than the manner in which they live with them. Hence, Karen Barad argues against the way that, 'everything – even "materiality" - is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation' (2003:801), and Eduardo Kohn sets out to investigate the other-than-symbolic forms of communication and relatedness that humans are situated within (2013). I describe this literature, not to follow its lead exactly, but to demonstrate that these authors are recognising, responding to, but also recreating, a demotion of 'metaphor' itself as a less-real, less-valid form of knowledge. This evaluation of metaphor as problematic, is important. To illustrate, Vivieros de Castro campaigns against the, 'Metaphysical *demotion* of the indigenous distribution of the world to the condition of metaphor" (1998:14 my italics). In striking similarity, attempts to bolster the legitimacy of human-like observations in the natural sciences take the form of insisting, 'Anthropomorphism is *not* metaphor' (i.e., it is sometimes real) (Asquith 1997).

This evidences a Euro-American context in which metaphor is persistently (but not consistently) devalued (even where non-human personhood is declared real, metaphor is still found wanting), and my participants somewhat share the epistemological space in which both natural and social scientists try to move away from metaphor and toward (various sorts of) better – more real- knowing. In the British equestrian environment, horses are recognised as really-real persons in ways that might appear anthropomorphic to scientifically minded non-horsey observers, but my participants were also on the watch for what they consider to be anthropomorphic mistakes among their peers. Therefore, they maintain something of a commitment to policing the distinction between real/metaphorical and human/horse (though, for horse people, the latter boundary doesn't rest on the possession of personhood). However, they *also* describe horses in human-like terms that were deployed *as* non-real descriptions akin to metaphors. Given the

epistemological responsibility to know the horse well introduced in the thesis thus far, why would horse people use non-real registers of knowledge to describe their horses, and how would they manage the ethical implications of that non-real knowledge state? A multitude of theories have been suggested by multidisciplinary authors in terms of the motives and causes of anthropomorphism. For example, Guthrie’s (1997) game theory that suggests anthropomorphism is a good evolutionary 'bet', Epley et al (2007) consider the drive for social comfort, and also the application of human-centred knowledge where species specific knowledge is lacking. Yet none of these theories, nor the contemporary anthropological attempts to acknowledge the reality of non-human personhood, engage with the practices of employing and managing such explicitly *non-real* registers of knowledge in an environment that values accurate knowledge and maintains a commitment to policing 'anthropomorphism'.

Anthropomorphism provides fertile ground for investigations of the deployment of the not-real, and yet this aspect has been overlooked. For example, Jessica Greenebaum investigates the infantilization of dogs at a Connecticut dog bakery (2004). Her ethnography communicates the lives of dog bakery users with warmth and fondness, yet we learn little about the epistemological frictions that might be underway. For example, she describes pet owners as '*similar to the image* of soccer moms who drive their kids to games and social events' (2004:119 my italics). This language keeps the parent-like relationship that owners have described in a state of make-believe or unreal, despite the fact Greenebaum's interlocutors are telling her directly they *are* their dogs' parents. They really *do* drive their dogs to social events, yet this activity, and others, are described as merely in the image of another, and it isn't quite clear whether this imaginary component is Greenebaum's assessment of reality, or her informants' own evaluations of the mitigated veracity of their propositional statements. The question remains open, as to the sense in which dog owners consider and mark their own descriptions *some sort of real*. Similarly, Adrian Peace investigates anthropomorphism as a rhetorical device in whale-watching trips, yet it is *his* definition of anthropomorphism, rather than his interlocutors, that structures that account (2005).

The structure and argument of the chapter

In this chapter I investigate these knowing practices through asking about the language ideologies in play. I use this term to refer to my participants expectations of language, in

terms of what can be said, what language is for, and what language does (Silverstein 1979, Woolard and Shieffelin 1994). Such an interest in language ideology has been useful for other anthropologists investigating a variety in concepts of personhood. Joel Robbins and Webb Keane have explored links between their participants' theories of language – who can speak, what speech is – and theories of personhood - what thought is, who or what can have which sorts of intention. Both have demonstrated that modern language ideology has proved challenging for Christian converts and linked this to alternate beliefs about personhood and mind (among the Urapmin, Robbins, 2001 and the Sumbanese, Keane 1997). I follow this example, in investigating riders' changing beliefs about what can or should be said (to, or about the horse) as a means to better understand how the difference between horse and human, thought and world, is conceptualised and managed.

The remainder of the chapter is taken up with describing and analysing three ways in which infantilization is treated by horse riders. These each demonstrate a different language ideology – in terms of expectations for and about speech – and different tones or 'registers' of speaking. I use the term 'registers of speech', which are different (though linked to) the genres of narratives I described in the previous chapter. While genre refers to a type of plot line, a romance, horror and so on, a register of speech refers to the manner with which the speaker *means* what she says; how real this account is, what she thinks of this story as she tells it, and how she expects others to analyse and evaluate the words. Thus, a romantic plot could feature within a comedy pastiche, a school English oral exam, or a fireside story – all might be considered *register*s of speech. In the first of my examples, I aim to describe a meta-linguistic reflexivity that is emerging as the 'cutting edge' of horsemanship. I call this register of speech 'care with words', and hope to capture something of the tone and taste of consideration, responsibility, enlightenment, and elegance that accompanies a drive toward regulating, reforming, and reframing horse-talk, where riders consciously opt for 'helpful' descriptions that enable positive relatedness to flourish. In the second section, I consider a register of speaking through 'tough love,' where there is an explicit value to 'saying it like it is.' Strangely, this often involves crass humour, metaphor, irony and tropes, and also often the exaggeration and 'owning' of potential welfare issues ("yes, I'm a horse beater and my horse hates me but there you go!"). Tough-love horse-talk, in these instances, garners audience approval and obliquely resources opinions from others, while maintaining an embodied confidence and

pragmatism. In the third section, I describe a register of speaking with, 'words from the heart', in which riders attempt to express the deep affection they feel towards their horses, but censor that speaking carefully. This includes the whispering of sweet nothings and use of 'motherese' in private spaces when addressing the horse, and the posting of anonymous love-type poetry in online spaces. Each of these sections describes a way of working with words that is not unique and internal to a particular group of people, but that can be thought of as different moments in the equestrian milieu, that individual owners will move between in different environments (to different degrees). Furthermore, each section describes contestations and friction in the way in which people talk, such that I do not present any of these language ideologies as complete or consistent ways of speaking, rather, as different problems of regulating speech.

My argument is that the child-like metaphor is useful because the concept of 'child' in the British imaginary enables an emphatic interest in the choices and opinions of the horse-child, but an ambiguity over the sort of active role they are able or expected to play in maintaining their relationships. The metaphorical state of non-real is useful in establishing (varied) tones of relatedness, while also enabling space for play for the existence of the *real* horse (and the real human) beyond what is communicable. The capacity to reflexively and responsibly manage the distinction between the real and the not-real emerges as an important ethical technique, and as central to the distinction between adult and child, humans and non-humans. This distinction is being re-energised anew as conventional equestrian ways of managing the not-real are being challenged (and, to some extent, infantilised themselves) by the new demand for meta-reflexivity.

Care with words

Teaching reflexive speech

In the Cotswolds, attached to a beautiful stone farmhouse, is a purpose-built classroom that can easily accommodate forty students. There is a large television and flip chart at the front, and tea making facilities at the back, and paddocks full of horses and ponies visible through the many windows and the French patio doors. This is the site of some of the alternative training courses introduced in Chapter Two, and on the bright March morning in question, it housed a group of fourteen students who had arrived to take the two-day 'Perfect Manners' course. The course title evokes an elocution and etiquette guide, rather

than a horse training system. This was exactly the comparison course director Kelly wished to make when she authored the book of the same name, subtitled, “How to behave so your horse does too.” Horses are often described as 'well mannered' or 'bad mannered' across the breadth of the equestrian scene (generally related to the management of personal space, not crowding the human, not making too much noise). Kelly's move, however, was to suggest that the *human's* manners might also need adjusting in order to reach a companionable relationship. Kelly holds a deep interest in human behaviour and is eager for me to share my anthropological research with both her, and her students, as often as possible.

At the beginning of the course, students introduce themselves to the group (sitting at desks), and explain why they have come, and what they would like to achieve. Some are shy and reserved and speak little, but more often, their narratives are colourful renditions of their equestrian lives, testaments to their ethical commitment to achieve good equine connection, and detailed, heartfelt descriptions of particular horses that matter. Debbie's story followed that pattern. Dressed in baggy jeans, a fleece top, and rubber wellies (no particular equestrian apparel), with brown-greying hair pulled back in a low pony tail, Debbie chain smoked at every chance she got. “Partly that’s to avoid having to talk to anyone,” she told me, with a wink. Debbie wasn't shy, so much as awkward – her voice was loud and gruff, she often spoke over others and then recognised her mistake and over apologised, once she stood too close and then asked whether I felt crowded, and she swore coarsely enough to make other students wince. Kelly corrected her on this point two or three times on the first day (“Debbie! You're *not* the swearing type, are you?”) until on the second day, she caught herself mid-swear by smacking a hand to her mouth and looking sheepish. Debbie's life had been tough – a car accident followed by mental health issues had left her out of work and, in her own words, suffering from low self-esteem. She'd ridden all her life, because her father had kept a couple of ponies on a scrap of land, but never achieved anything much in terms of competitions, they hadn't had any way to transport the horses. “Hell, at one point, we didn't even have a saddle!” She guffawed. Debbie wasn't entirely unusual as a participant on these courses, though in comparison to the middle-class, more monied alternative horsemanship consumer suggested in Chapter Two, she provides an example of the breadth of variety of equestrians who might find themselves on the margins of the competent, classy, horsey

set and inspired to find 'another way'[32]. One tutor told me, “We get all the broken people. Broken for different reasons, but all misfiring somehow. They are drawn to us.”

Debbie introduced herself by overviewing her life history, and then talking about a horse she had brought on the course with her. I jotted down some fragments of her rushed narrative as she spoke.

> A little gypsy cob, who looks like butter wouldn't melt [in his mouth]. She loved him, but he was a stubborn bugger and a fucking nightmare sometimes. He threw his toys out the pram, spat his dummy out, and had his little tants [tantrums]. This had resulted in a broken finger, some rope burns, and a smashed-up horse trailer so far. These 'tants' came about because he knew he had her 'wrapped around his little finger' she explained, but also because he trusted her enough to test her out (thus explaining better behaviour with people he trusted less). You'll love him, she said. He's a cracker, but he's a cheeky little sod and too bright for his own good. Either that or he's too stupid! He'll probably prove me wrong and be a little angel just to make mummy look a prat!
>
> Field notes, June 2015.

Kelly took a thoughtful breath, smiled at Debbie, and thanked her, and then turned to me. Despite myself, we exchanged the briefest of looks that said, '*Aren't Debbie's' narratives interesting?!*' and then Kelly addressed the group, explaining that I was studying narratives just like these, at Cambridge University. “Does everybody know the word 'anthropomorphism'?” She asked, (three quarters of the room nodded). “Rosie can tell you more about how to be aware of the sorts of narratives you are using,” she asserted, “And don't be embarrassed about it, Debbie, I think you will find it actually really empowering to look at your horse in a different way.”

The last intention of an anthropologist is to be teaching participants how to speak (and know) better. I found myself wearing too many hats at once, ‘expert horse trainer' and 'Cambridge academic' on the one hand, being asked to teach, and reflexive ethnographer on the other, who wanted to respect and legitimise alternate ways of sense-making, seeking to learn. I defined the term anthropomorphism simply – as using 'human-like descriptions,' but I also explained a counter-term, 'mechanomorphism' – as using apparently 'neutral' phraseology that was in fact, machine-like (Spada 1997, DeWaal 1999). My aim was to suggest that whatever terms we use have interesting associations

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[32]This weekend course costs £325

and histories. I hoped to move away from any potential for my comments to be felt as an assault on Debbie's self-introduction as invalid, toward a broader interest point that emphasises language as a 'non-neutral medium' (In Duranti's terms, 2011:28), which simply means, I explained, that language *does things*. The students looked engaged and positively interested, to my relief, including Debbie. Kelly thanked me for my input, writing down the word 'mechanomorphism', which she hadn't heard before, and added that the important point was to look at the impact of the words we use. “Does it help, or not help, to see the horse as throwing his toys out the pram? She asked,” leaving the answer implicit (it probably does not help), and we moved on to other things. Throughout the rest of the course, while we were working with horses, people were liable to check their wording either by asking me directly, “Is it better to say the horse is 'stressed' rather than 'stubborn?'” Or glancing over in my direction, presumably hoping to read my expression in response to a potentially questionable word or phrase. At one point, when we came in for a tea break, Kelly asked me loudly – for the whole rooms benefit – whether the students had been using ‘clean language.’ Presuming she was referring to the swearing and flustered about my apparent role as language-monitor, I responded with attempted humour, that yes, of course, “They had been very civil!” “Oh no!” she responded, “Not the swearing. I mean, how are they doing with their narratives?!” The room full of students laughed at the miscommunication, but I found the analogy between two sorts of 'clean' language deeply informative. Both felt (to me) like potentially patronising adjustments, that had the aim of making students not only more enlightened, sophisticated, responsible and reflexive in the way they used language (suggesting they lacked, and needed those qualities), but also more delicate, tasteful and inoffensive.

<u>The scholastic point of view</u>

As awkward a field-encounter as this might have been, I was driven to ruminate on equestrians' willingness to accept and seek out opportunities for reflecting on their use of language. I recognised the interest in anthropological (ish) knowledge as one example among many that demonstrates an increasing interest in human society, psychology and semiotics as part of what is constructed as 'the cutting edge' of equestrian thinking. A rising star on the celebrity equestrian scene during my fieldwork year was sports psychologist, Charlie Unwin. One top selling book (and subsequent series of teacher training programs) was named, “*Ride With Your Mind*” (2008). The author, riding instructor Mary Wanless, set out to revolutionise the way riding was taught, by paying

close attention not only to the way bodies moved in relation to one another biomechanically, but also, to the way bodies moved in relations to words. Good riding, she insisted, can be achieved if we can learn how to harness language in order to teach the ineffable 'feel' of good connection. In the transcript below from one of her books, Wanless explains the work of educational psychologist Guy Claxton for her equestrian readers, and we can see both a high degree of reflexivity about the way language works, and a responsibilization for riders and instructors to get to grips with linguistic ideology:

> Alongside the practical development of our skills we are all the recipient of both the formal and the informal education that teaches us in language about a particular field of knowledge, this develops the wordscape [understanding of words] and at this level you can think of ideas being linked together by flags that form linguistic bunting. But many of these words do not have accompanying understanding in the brainscape [practical knowhow], just as many of the indentations in the brainscape are not flagged in the wordscape [i.e. knowing how to do something you can't describe]. While language can liberate us hugely, it brings with it a set of snares that may become apparent to you as you read the above. Claxton quotes writer Aldus Huxley who states that every individual is at once both the beneficiary and the victim of the linguistic tradition into which he has been born.
>
> (1991:20)

It is interesting how some equestrians have taken up what Bourdieu calls, 'The scholastic point of view' (1990) and initiated a philosophical discourse of metacognition (or thinking about thinking, Proust and Fortier 2018). While reflexivity has been identified as a central practice for those living in late modernity (e.g. Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), some have argued for the variety in forms and qualities of reflexivity among different parts of the population (e.g. Archer 2003). Will Atkinson argues that an enhanced state of explicit and abstract reflexivity is most visible among the 'dominant' classes, who, having been set up for success in school and subsequently university, have developed the skills and valuation of explicitly reflexive thought (2010). Paul Sweetman considers reflexivity itself as an increasingly populous form of Bourdieusian habitus (rather than the counterpoint to habitus), however, he also suggests it carries particular tasteful appeal within middle class circles (2003). A link between class and this new meta-linguistic (speaking about speaking) reflexive trend is not straightforward in the equestrian example. On the one hand, it is notable that such reflexivity is accompanied by a context of increasing 'middle-classification' (Edwards, Evans and Smith 2012) of the equestrian sphere, as described in Chapter One. But on the other, there did not appear to be any correlation between those

particular individuals engaged in such '*Enlightened Equitation*' (another book and brand name, Moffett 1999) and class, described as income, family background, or university attendance. Still, the 'care with words' approach did feel like a 'classy' and 'classist' endeavour, a distinction between the considered and elegant and the brash and rough. I will revisit this point at the end of this section.

In considering Wanless as exemplar, we also complicate the distinction between traditional and alternative training made in the previous chapter. Wanless is much like a traditional instructor, she does not focus centrally on the horse’s herd behaviours, or on the relationship between horse and rider on the ground, nor does she present herself as starkly at odds with traditional ethics. With a bossy voice, shrill with received pronunciation, dressed in shirt and gilet, and invested in the traditional sport of dressage, her aim is to enhance and enlighten traditional teaching practices, rather than reject their principles completely. Furthermore, alternative trainers (such as Monty Roberts and Pat Parelli) show no such interest in developing an openly reflexive relationship with their own language use. They are invested in outing traditional narratives that they see as wrong, but not in considering the way language functions in others, or their own rhetorical tactics per se. Such metadiscursive (Duranti 2015) reflexivity seems to be the newest wave of 'revolution', and those who are drawn towards it hold a variety of positions in relation to the 'first wave' revolutionaries.

As an example of this range of relationships with alternative movement, an elderly equestrian, Ros, attended many Parelli demonstrations and told me she had struggled, at first, to get along with the language. It was too emotional and had all these special sayings and alliterations she wasn't sure if they were just clichés or marketing or what. But then she started to notice the effect of the words Parelli chose. They made people upbeat, relaxed, and confident, she said. “There *is* a real difference between telling someone to show the horse who’s boss [traditional language] and telling them to become the horse’s leader. If they show the horse who’s boss, they clench their fists. If they become the horse’s leader, they puff up their chests,” she explained. What is particularly interesting is the way Ros portrays herself as having 'risen above' the marketing spiel, neither being 'duped' nor rejecting it whole heartedly, but observing the impact of language on minds, bodies and relationships.

Helpful words

There were certain types of language most likely to be rejected by those who adopted an explicitly reflexive approach with words. These included statements where the horse's behaviour was interpreted as deliberately negative toward the human. For example, at the start of a riding lesson, Sarah, a dapple-grey mare, shuffled repeatedly backwards away from the mounting block, preventing the lesson proper from getting underway. Embarrassed, her owner, Dawn, told the instructor, Linda, "She's just showing me up in front of you now, because she's mad at me after that bad session yesterday. She's got such a temper on her, this mare,. She's determined to test me." "'That's an interesting way to think about it," Linda responded, "But whose script are you running, yours or hers? [pause] Is there another way to tell it? [pause] Is there a less challenging story that could apply?" After the session, Linda spoke with me about her care with words. 'The best thing to say, if you're stuck for good words, is 'interesting,'" she said, 'For people or horses. It gives you time to think about what is good to say, what is going to have the right effect, and it doesn't commit you to anything negative or positive while you consider how to do it. Sometimes, 'that's interesting' is all I can say, and I just leave it at that. 'Interesting' does no harm."

Even where the horse wasn't portrayed as *calculating* defiance, narratives likely to be actively re-framed were those considered too negative, portraying the horse, or the relationship, in a bad light and contributing to the problem. Hence, I saw 'angry' reworked into 'tense', 'rude' into 'struggling to listen' and 'stubborn' into 'stuck'. Each reconsideration of appropriate framing changed the emotional and ethical tone in the rider's body, and, as Linda told me, 'made them more likely to see solutions rather than invest in their own problems.' In this way, some un-truths could be considered 'helpful beliefs.' For example, when Sandra explained to her student that horses simply *cannot be naughty* and encouraged her to seek another narrative for the problem (though later she admitted to me, that they were probably as capable of naughtiness as they were of being deliberately good). She explained that she simply never *thought* of horses as naughty, because it only got people 'braced up and into trouble' to do so.

This way of working with words is at odds with the dominant language ideology reported within the modern West. Such an ideology has been described as presuming the primary use and quality of language is its referential capacity, utilised by an intentional speaker, in

order to relay information. (Duranti 1993, 2015, Rosaldo 1982). In contrast, riders and instructors employing an ethic of 'care with words' recognise the *performativity* of language keenly, particularly in terms of the impact of words on the affective and embodied state of the speaker and listeners. They do not reject metaphors categorically, so in some senses seem to move away from the typical modern ethic of privileging true speech. However, they retain and reconfigure an investment in the intentionality of the speaker and their responsibility for producing speech. A 'care with words' approach makes the speaker reflexively responsible for the way in which they frame the horse, and it urges them to consider both the sources, and the impacts, of the words they choose.

Infantilization appears within these dynamics as likely problematic, as it suggests the speaker is not in considered control of what they say and where it comes from, and not evaluating the impacts of their words. Furthermore, according to its critics, infantilization demonstrates – and *instigates* – the wrong sort of tone in the relationship, as it is often associated with tantruming, spoiltness, and naughtiness (more to come in section two). Within this way with words, the distinction between human and animal is reconfigured. On one level, this appears an equalising move. Animals are framed in dignified terms, as reasonable, positive, well intentioned, subjective beings. The emphasis on performativity of language highlights the accompanying non-verbal communication that constitutes the horse-human relatedness, situating the human within a shared world of embodied affectivity. In some ways, then, the ethic of care with words is in sympathy with the posthuman movement that unsettles the distinctions 'anthropomorphism' presumes, between thinking human and raw world. However, the 'care with words' approach also accentuates the reflexive responsibility of the *human* to frame the animal well. This responsibilization emphasises the distinction between human, who does the framing; and animal, who responds to the embodied impacts of those words.

A similar distinction is maintained within some British parenting practices, where parents hold responsibility for care in describing their children in positive, solutions-based terms, relating to a growing awareness of the damaging effects of 'labelling' a child badly. Unsurprisingly, this parenting practice is situated particularly within the middle classes (Holloway 1998). Enhanced reflexivity provides a hierarchical means of distinction between human and animal, adult and child, and this helps to explain the classist feel of 'care with words' adjustments of language. Those found in need of adjustment by this

approach appear lower on the hierarchy of reflexivity too, as is evident in the care taken, by the reflexively-minded instructors, to positively, tactfully frame the *human* misdemeanours (as interesting) and their corrections (as empowering). In moments of correction, those brashly speaking humans, like children and animals, appear somewhat passive and oblivious to the impact of words, rather than able to harness them through reflection towards gentle ends. Just as horses appear bad mannered when they don't manage the impact of their noisy, large, bodies; humans appear ungainly and potentially harmful where they don't manage the impact of their words. However, in the next section I would like to show the sophisticated nuances of ethical reflexivity that are at play during these apparently brash instances of infantilization.

The language of tough love

'Tough love' on the yard

Walking into the livery yard, at the peak activity time of 6pm on a Sunday evening, the atmosphere of wordiness that one encounters is at stark odds with the considered 'care with words' register of speech. The yard is a lively, bustling, storied place – full of chatter about the day's competition results, declarations about the horse's awful mood today, check-ins with an owner whose horse needed the vet last week, critical evaluations of the bad judging, riding, or conduct of some acquaintance or other, and lots of rough teasing among friends. I, too, was the subject of this banter, "Alright Scott of the Antarctic?" (I do feel the cold, and overdress for the weather), or "Dear GOD let's hope nobody sees us" as we headed out for a hack - my time had been short, my horse was unbrushed. Much of the banter revolved around sexual innuendos, there were shrieks of laughter one day when, considering a new purchase, Jo compared riding 'hats', and accidentally muttered that 'Bertie has quite a large helmet'. The riding world is not short of such opportunities. Another category for rough-housing involved jibes about one's ethics, particularly those seen as too soft, emotive, or fanciful. "Have you been hugging your horse again? That poor bugger." Bertie said with a smile when I returned from grooming George in the field.

While yard talk is full or irony, humour, metaphor and trope (as we shall see more shortly), it somehow also carries a sense of 'straight talking', telling it like it is, speaking plainly, warmly, confidently and authentically. This is not to say all yard-talk is the same,

one of the most noticeable differences as I moved from one yard to another during fieldwork was the genre of banter, the tone of horse stories, and the 'loudness' of comaraderie. For example, when Leeanne first moved her horse to Paddock Farm, it was her language that marked her out as different from the other liveries. While their talk was sometimes full of innuendoes, hers was plain lewd, while theirs often joshed and teased their daft horses (as much as they teased each other), she insulted her horse in the coarsest of terms. On one occasion where she declared her horse a 'fucking cunt' with genuine anger after an upsetting ride, Jess gasped and jumped to his defence, stroking his nose and speaking to him in staged tones– for Leeanne's benefit "Oh no! That's not a very nice thing for mummy to say about you, is it gorgeous?!" Aside from this episode, as far as I know, nobody spoke to Leeanne about her language, and any social sanctions or negative reactions to her speech were so subtle I did not record them – yet within six weeks Leeanne's banter had adjusted in line with the rest of the crew.

The 'language of tough love' approach bore resemblances to a typical British working-class humour which sociologist Sam Friedman's interviewees (at Edinburgh Fringe) describe as being "unafraid to express oneself" and "hanging out dirty washing in public" (2011). However, there was also something quintessentially equestrian about the tough love approach that in some environments carried hallmarks of an upper class, rural, elite sort of speech. Christine, a well-respected equestrian in her sixties, spoke with a posh, plummy voice as she told me about all of her favourite people and horses, 'He's as queeny as they come and such a bitchy little thing but I just adore him,' 'she was an absolute toe-rag, a real toad, but she could jump the moon.' Christine was known, and loved, for 'telling it like it is' in riding lessons, which (as in Chapter Two) sometimes resulted in students' tears. Her cutting insults and demands for decent riding accompanied regular use of the word 'dear' and 'darling', and she was genuinely bemused and appalled when they started 'the waterworks' as she called it. "Now, come on, dear, I really don't see the point in any of that, you're either going to ride better, or you aren't. And if you aren't, you might as well get off and go home. I can't do a thing with you while your whimpering," she would retort. "It's alright," riders would say to me afterwards, "I needed a kick up the arse."

Often, riders would travel together to competitions, sharing horse transport vehicles for financial efficiency and comaraderie. At Paddock Farm, these outings took place in Bertie

and Jill's big horse lorry, known as 'the party bus'. Four horses could fit on the lorry, and usually two to four other people, not competing that day, would come along to support, groom, watch. The lorry 'living' (an area behind the cab with sofa, fridge and hob) was the communal base at a show, where ties were fastened, dressage tests remembered, judges' comments disseminated, and coffee shared. During the early morning journeys, and the hub of activity upon arrival, the lorry living became a particular site of tough-love language, bravado, and banter. This led me to recognise the affordances of this sort of language in terms of bolstering a positive attitude. I use the term 'positive' here, which my interlocutors would recognise as apposite. However, this is clearly quite a different form of positivity from the helpful beliefs described in Section One. There, positivity was akin to harmony, the counterpoint of negative, unfavourable, unconsidered, or adversarial descriptions. Here, positivity is full of gumption, initiative, resilience, 'character' and wilfulness, and is opposed to reservedness, meekness, drabness, dryness, or softness.

Working it out through play

The use of irony enabled riders to garner the support of their peers in asserting their competence and authority over the horse, and also to resource others' opinions without fully exposing their own. We can explore this point in some detail with reference to an example of infantilization presented below.

Roxy was a short, shy, smiley, heavy-set woman in her thirties, who often seemed over-worked (at a DIY store) and hurried, short of time. She kept rescued ponies and ex-battery chickens as well as her main riding horse, a 6-year-old coloured cob, who was known for 'taking the mickey,' “He's the yard clown!” I was told on introduction. On this particular sunny afternoon, Roxy had just returned to the yard and unloaded her horse, Dillon, from her trailer. Roxy's competition clothing was in a state of disarray, top shirt buttons undone, tie missing, shirt sweaty and hair flattened to her head from the heat of the riding hat. She looked dishevelled, tired and disheartened. As a few of us were finishing up our evening chores, we asked, “How had the day gone, were there any ribbons?” We join the conversation just after Roxy had explained that Dillon had been very hard work at the competition, attained low scores, and the judge had commented that they were not forward going enough. Present are Tony (Roxy’s husband) and Liz, another horse owner.

Tony: You've been banging on about batteries for weeks, and I keep thinking, it

doesn't work because it isn't his energy levels

Roxy: Batteries? Oh, his Duracell has run out. Yes, I do say that!

Tony: Because when Lauren rides him he'll canter for half an hour but you're like "oh, oh, he can't do it".

Roxy: It's hard work, isn't it? [in mock-sympathetic tone, speaking to Dillon]

Tony: It's cos he can't be bothered and you don't make him!

Liz: It's because mummy's too kind to him!

Roxy: Well there's only so many times one can slap them in the dressage arena with your whip, isn't there, before one is classed as a "mummy's beating her pony up!"

Laughter

Liz: Just jab them with a pair of spurs instead!

Roxy: He just *has* to test the boundaries, doesn't he? I'm sure he thinks it's funny to see mummy huffing and puffing away working harder than he is! But I'm not letting it get to me, I just keep asking him. We'll get there, eventually, he just has to grow up a bit first. He hasn't really grasped the fact he has a job yet.

Liz: Bless him, he's such a character. Aren't you? [turns to Dillon and gives him a scratch].

Infantilization seems to play at least two roles here, at first it references over-softness in Liz's critique, but then Roxy re-establishes her own resolve and emotional comportment through referring to Dillon's infantilistic boundary-testing behaviour and her un-phased response to it. In that second form, a different side to the maternal relationship is called to mind, in which it is inevitable that children (and horses) will defy and resist control at times, sometimes in ways that humiliate their guardians. This is normal, healthy, and to be expected, (though also irksome) and the mother's role is to rise above any goading, stay calm, and consistent, develop a thick skin, and work hard at parenting in the hope that this is a passing phase. In this framing, the (Western) child's liminal accountability is paramount (Lancy 2014:47). David Lancy describes a British history of knowing children as animal-like, with particular expectations of unsociability and unyielding natures (Lancy 2014:157-8), therefore their choices need not be taken as legitimate and accountable in the way adults/humans would be.

The un-seriousness of Dillon's apparent defiance is underscored further by the fact he is

'laughing' in the account. It is, after all, only *play*, only a joke at defiance, he doesn't take a serious stand against the requested activity, he just tests the boundaries in good humour, and as is to be expected (in this account) of children and horses. In fact, he appears a junior member, but nonetheless a harmonious part, of a community which plays at/with confrontation all the time. His behaviour resembles the wilful, jovial boisterousness that typifies conventional equestrian speech. Most aggravation or contestation in this environment isn't *really* meant, but is a part of strengthening bonds, developing character, and practising a form of relatedness that is loaded with pertinacious intentionality.

Like the humans described here, Dillon (as described by Roxy) demonstrates the ability to act 'as-if,' to behave *as though* he is resisting work, without really meaning it. According to Gregory Bateson's play theory, laughter can act as a play marker, that is, a meta-communication which marks a communicative context in which things don't mean quite what they normally would (1955). This means neither Dillon's resistance, nor Roxy's account of it, are to be taken 'at their word.' She plays with the idea that he plays at ignoring her. We can't be sure to what extent Roxy *really* thinks Dillon is capable of mockery, nor can we be sure what Dillon thinks of his 'job' and Roxy.

<u>Naked speech and accountability</u>

We can learn more about local language ideology from this use of humour, particular when we compare it to Webb Keane's work on modernity, Christianity and sincerity (1997, 2002). Keane describes how referentiality and intentionality are prioritised concepts within the language ideology of both Western modern scientific and religious projects of self-transformation, particularly seen through the ethic of sincere speech (2002:66) in which the speaker ought to convey the whole truth with minimum use of rhetorical language. Keane shows that Protestant prayer follows this modern language ideology, demanding the sincerity (and, though he comments on it less, veracity) of a first-person voice, who, referring to the self accurately and with true intentions, is able to communicate with God and thus work on, transform, and maintain one's own soul. Keane's description of sincerity is in keeping with the sort of accountability for speech which Judith Butler describes (and resists), "Which demands that we manifest and maintain self-identity at all times and require that others do the same" (2005:42). She is speaking of the ways in which people are expected to be able to account for themselves, to explain, in words, who they are and how this relates to their actions. Butler's point is

that this sort of accountability places a high expectation on speaker's capacity to produce a coherent self-authored account, which, given the intersubjectivity involved in language use and identity formation, is an unfathomably difficult task.

I would suggest that my participants share the ideology Keane describes and Butler retaliates against: that there is an expected moral relationship between words, truth and self, but they find ways to mitigate the demands that Butler sees as so untenable. We could see riders' use of humour – lack of 'naked speech' (without rhetoric)- as deflecting such heavy accountability, defending against the possibility that what one says may be taken in singularity to expose one's true intentions, beliefs, character, and the quality of one's referential knowledge about the horse. 'This isn't a really-real account, don't judge it (and me) too literally,' Roxy conveys through metacommunicative irony and laughter.

Humour plays the biggest role in the statement Roxy makes wherein too much smacking will mean 'mummy's a pony beater'. This sentence was met with laughter all around, and in fact, exemplifies a pattern of overstating and 'owning' potential welfare breaches. These instances often involved a dual perspective, as though speaking to the horse, but also mocking the horse's imaginary over-reaction to (pseudo-forceful) measures of training. "Poor Barney! Mummy has beat him and beat him today and now he's sulking!" or "I know, I know, you're terrified of me now because I'm an awful mother and I shouted at you!" These comments were ostensibly 'to' the horse, but staged to be heard by the human audience, as in conversation analyst Felicia Robert's description of the way vets and owners speak 'to' the animal to communicate tactfully with one another (2004). These ironic horse-beating remarks seemed to enable the speaker to take on a complexity of perspectives; horse, audience, and rider/owner – with the latter quite possibly 'in two minds'. In referring to herself paradoxically as both 'mummy' and 'pony beater', Roxy seems able to communicate that she is acutely aware that there *is* difference in acceptable treatment of horses compared to children, and that she knows there is an intersecting negotiation at hand between being too soft and too hard. The account of herself given between the lines of this joke is in fact of neither a 'mummy' *nor* a 'pony beater'. The laughter comes as a response to the candid, casual and exaggerated description of physical coercion, the multiple viewpoints, and the heavy dose of irony. This all allows Roxy to negotiate a way to occupy the reasonable middle ground, in the face of a difficult evaluation surrounding appropriate levels of force that depends, partly, on what Dillon

was doing and why.

Multivocality enables a complexity of possible perspectives within Roxy's account (as in Hill 1995, Keane 2015:143-150). The irony evident enables her to not-quite sign up to ideas she is trying out, which means she can at once hold opposing perspectives and confuse the assignment of agency and authorship (see Lambek 2003 for a discussion of agency, irony and multivocality relating to spirit possession).We could also see Roxy's use of tropes (isn't his behaviour just *typical*?! she suggests) as moving authorship away from her own voice and towards that of a broader societal position that anyone/everyone might share[33]. Roxy uses tropes which have been spoken many times before, that are acceptable fodder for representing such moral entanglements pragmatically and positively. Tropes were commonplace in equestrian circles, and infantilization was a favourite trope, both as denoting over-softness of the mother/owner, and indexing expectable and discountable equine recalcitrance. Writing of tropes, Michael Carrithers et al quote Kenneth Burke, 'A trope ... must also be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality,' (1969:45). Carrithers goes on to explain how through the use of a trope, 'The situation itself is changed, deflected.' (Carrithers, Bracken and Emery 2011:662). One of the things which the trope does here, is give Roxy a 'stance' (DuBois 2007) which brings her into a broad alignment with her audience in relation to the problem of Dillon's poor performance. As the conversation goes on, through humour, she is nudged toward a frame that emphasises her ability to handle the situation competently and fairly, and she nudges others towards recognising that, too. The consensus position reached is that the crux of the problem is Dillon's character and age, his lack of maturity, though a fondness for these same features is also reinstated. Humour might seem counter to the Western value for naked speech and speaker-accountability that Keane identifies and Butler retaliates against, yet it also seems able to convey a sincerity in Roxy's intent, and is a wholly useful tactic in establishing credibility in this instance. It enables Roxy to garner the support of others, who, through playful responses, can tactfully reprise the speaker's gambits. It also enables Roxy to communicate something of the complexity of these moral entanglements that might always be considered otherwise. It therefore enables speakers to *develop* (rather than report) a credible account for, and

[33]This is not unlike the language ideology among Sumbanese Marapu, who Keane describes as at odds with the modern, Protestant ethic of sincerity they encountered upon converting. In contrast to sincere self-authored Protestant prayer speech, Marapu used formalised, repeated, rhyming couplets in rituals, refracting the origins of their own speech towards the agency of the ancestors who invented it (Keane 1997)

with, the agreement of the listeners. This supports Michael Lempert's assertion that we should, 'Imagine the evaluative reflection of ethics as a communicative event that occurs prototypically in interaction with others.' (2014:467) These interactive ethical events, he explains, 'May sometimes look like miniaturised versions of the full-blown ethical debates and belaboured decision making that academics and courts and religious institutions engage in, but they may also be as spare and fleeting as, say, a furled brow' (2014:468).

All this rhetorical talk that avoids committing to a singular, 'true' position makes for interesting comparison with ethnography reporting an Opacity Doctrine in the south pacific (Robbins and Rumsey 2008). There, people say that they cannot report what others are thinking (e.g. Stasch 2008). Some argue that this is a matter of concealment, of 'unknowing knowing' when people, for example, as in Rupert Stasch's ethnography of the Korowai, report they do not know why they were given a particular gift, even when they might have some idea (Stasch 2008:446, Keane, 2008:479-481). While this suggests Melanesian peoples do *not* speak what they *do* know about others, here, I would suggest riders *do s*peak what they *do not yet know,* or not quite know, or not know in a particular, singular, accurate and literal way. Just as Stasch's informants aimed to retain autonomous control over concealment and revelation of the self (rather than have it revealed by others), my participants' multiperspectival, ironic and tropic speaking also enabled the speaker to keep something concealed and hidden regarding their true feelings about the relationship with the horse, whether, for example, Roxy really felt like she had not performed well or that Dillon's evasions were unreasonable.

'Get real! Grow up!'

The section on 'tough love' would be incomplete if I suggested such a register of speech was always jovial and satirical. Tactful 'nudges' were the most common methods of managing 'rough' language, but occasionally, 'straight-talking' took a more direct, exposing, and sometimes brutal form, when fantasy was felt to have gone too far, people (and horses) were implored to reconnect with the real world, to 'get a grip'. This could involve the policing of anthropomorphism, particularly in riding lessons, where instructors like Christine might attest, “No! Stop babying him, he is a bloody horse, and you are going to ruin him.” Sometimes this involved telling *horses* in no uncertain terms that it was not acceptable for them to act like children too, as in the case below.

I was out riding with Lorraine, around tracks that both of us knew well. Lorraine, who was in her late-twenties and had described herself to me as an 'alpha mare,' could normally be heard from far across the yard, loud with frustration or excitement. Her deep love of Buddy, a big, bay warmblood, whom she had owned for many years, was often narrated by Lorraine in the tack room, like a turbulent romance, whereby love endured, despite fall outs, and through many emotional ups and downs. Sometimes, in her words, Buddy was an arse. I was on Gorgeous George, who was behaving beautifully, swinging along at a relaxed walk, on a loose rein, ears gently flickering back and forth. I was able to take my feet out of the stirrups and stretch my legs down lazily, enjoying the summer breeze. Lorraine was not getting such a smooth ride, Buddy seemed to have his eyes on stalks, and kept spooking at the hedgerows as though there were monsters hidden within them. This wasn't unusual for Buddy, sometimes he had days like this, but there were enough days in between where he would walk the same route calmly, that Lorraine was convinced his apparent fear wasn't real.

“For fucks sake Buddy!” She exclaimed as he shot to the side yet again, this time causing her to momentarily lose balance, she had been twisted round in the saddle chatting to me and his violent motion caught her off guard and cut her chatter off mid-sentence. Buddy stared intently towards the offending hedge, in - what looked to me like – terror, and rushed sideways to get away. Instantly, Lorraine regained balance, shortened her reins, and slapped him with the whip on the shoulder. “Will you bloody grow up and stop pissing about!” she growled at him. “No! It's not bloody funny anymore. Now walk on and walk on properly.”

She rode him forward firmly, giving him the occasional jab with her heels, and holding him in a tighter rein contact, in a rounder outline (a head and neck posture, see Chapter 5), for a few strides before turning back to me, and saying,

> He's not afraid. It's all just a game to him, he does it just because he can. But he's not a baby any more. I've had enough of it, he's been round these routes a hundred times and he knows full well there is nothing scary in the hedges, there are no bloody dragons in Cambridgeshire, but he just has to muck about. But it's getting bloody dangerous and he should know better. It won’t be bloody funny if he gets me off, I can tell you that. There will be big trouble. (Then directed to the horse) BIG TROUBLE.

Dictaphone recording August 2016

In Lorraine's view, Buddy acted as though he was afraid, when she *knew* he wasn't. Being afraid of irrational things might be acceptable or even expected behaviour for an infant (human or equine), but adults should have learned the distinction between reality and fantasy, she seems to suggest. Furthermore, he seems to disregard an adult-like awareness of *consequences*, of responsibility for Lorraine's safety, of the impacts of his playful behaviour. He is behaving irresponsibly, but he has the *capacity* for responsibility. Perhaps in Butler's terms, he is providing an unacceptable account of self, perhaps in Keane's terms, he is being insincere. The child-likeness of Buddy's behaviour is certainly not seen as any sort of 'elevation' here (as in Greenebaum' dog-children), he is degrading (himself) from proper, real, adult status to that of child. Lorraine’s critique of Buddy is not unlike one I heard her give, on another occasion, of her husband's weekend party-going behaviour.

In comparison to the 'care with words' register of speech, horses in the 'tough love' register of speaking are much more readily described as (possibly) capable of lying, playing and reflexively (mis)representing themselves. As in the first section, the *performative* role of language is foregrounded in these speech events, and the referential capacity of words to denote accurate truths is diminished. As in the first section, the distinction between metaphorical and real descriptions is not always easily made, sometimes deliberately obscured. However, the distinction between fantasy and reality, child and adult, non-human and human is still important; adults are expected to manage the real/non-real distinction carefully in dialogue with others, and sometimes, horses are considered capable of holding this adult-like accountability too. In the 'tough love' register of speech, there is a taste for pro-activity, resilience, and wilfulness in the way language is used to cultivate and bolster a credible, workable, and authoritative articulation of and with the horse. Non-real language performs a role here in the formation of both a strong character and a strong community. While tropes, ironies, and rough-housing language appeared ill considered and unreflexive to the instructors who aimed to cultivate a more meta-reflexive and autonomously reflexive care with words, here I have described something more akin to *communicative* reflexivity (Archer 2003:167-210) whereby a multiperspectival approach is maintained and others' opinions tactfully resourced through dialogue, involving a sophisticated and sensitive

understanding of moral ambiguities.

Words from the heart

Whispered sweet nothings

If you enter the yard when it seems deserted, perhaps in the middle of a working day, the peaceful soundscape is predominantly birdsong, distant traffic, and the hay-munching of horses. They are quiet creatures usually, who only make verbal noises (whinnies, snorts, wickers) when stressed or excited. In these moments of quiet conviviality with horses, one might well speak with, or to, them in a markedly different tone than the staged performances of prosthetised conversation for a human audience described above. On a few occasions, I stumbled across owners muttering away to their horses. Usually, they would stop speaking with embarrassment, having thought they were the only humans on site. I too, was drawn to chatter with George on some, but not all, of our private time together. Because of the private nature of this talk, it is hard to know what owners say, and how they say it. When I asked them about it, most owners admitted to talking to their horses. Most believed the horse did not understand *what* they said but appreciated the tone with which they said it. Some owners were happy talking to their horses in front of certain people but not others. Rochelle, for example, spoke to her honey-coloured cob, Millie, in baby-ish terms. “Are you a good girl, Millie, yes you are! You are, aren't you? You're mummy's lovely little darling, aren't you? Do you know I love you? I think you do. Did you win a rosette, my clever girl? You did, didn't you, a big red rosette!” Rochelle cooed one evening to Millie, as I completed stable chores in the next door stable. When Bertie walked around the corner, Rochelle fell quiet, and when he left she came into my stable mortified with embarrassment, “I can't believe Bertie heard me talking to Millie! I'll never live that down!” she remorsed.

As in Rochelle's case, this private, affectionate, stream-of-consciousness type of speech is often akin to 'motherese,' which has been studied by linguists as 'child directed communication' (CDC) or 'caretaker speech'. The form of CDC speech common to Euro-American communities is recognised by a greater number of questions than adult orientated speech (even where the child isn't expected to answer), a higher and fluctuating pitch of intonation, and a predominant use of present tense. While it could be argued that these are tactics for deliberately developing the child’s linguistic capabilities, Elinor Ochs

and Bambi Schieffelin emphasise the extent to which such talk is often not consciously planned, but an example of habitus (Ochs 1984, Ochs, Solomon and Sterponi 2005, Ochs and Sheiffelin 2011). Linguistic researcher Meredeth Rowe found that parents with higher education level and family income showed more of a prevalence towards child directed communication than those from less advantaged backgrounds (2008). Some have recognised the way a similar form of speech is used with pets, particularly dogs (e.g. Mitchell 2001). For my part, I found myself speaking with George much as I speak with my baby daughter, Hester. I would explain, in what I think was a reasonable, adult tone, where we were going and what the planned activity was, point out things of interest, and sometimes ask after my conversation 'partner's' opinion about an event or object. With Hester, I was assured by online resources, health visitor advice, and other parents, that this would maximise our bond and best enable her language development. With George, I can only say that it felt companionable, kind, and relaxing to verbalise in the way that I did. Sometimes, I caught owners whispering sweet nothing to their horses, stroking their long ears gently, with the horses dozing, eyes half closed. “You are such a lovely, good boy,” they might murmur. It seemed to me that this form of speech was about expressing, and therefore, somehow more fully inhabiting, a range of affectionate sentiments. But it was censored and embarrassing, this sort of language didn't fit with the image of credibility described above, but revealed owners as soft-hearted and soft-headed, and perhaps guilty of 'projection' or even 'madness' – in fact, many self-described as 'bonkers', 'crazy' or as having 'lost my marbles' when I enquired about their tendency to speak with the horse.

I liken this somewhat deviant use of whispered motherese to another way in which owners censor their linguistic expressions of affectivity, involving the writing, and careful, often anonymous, distributing, of poetry. While the former is embodied and interactive, and the latter is written and computer mediated, still, I categorise them together here for the commonality of censorship, and for the way that some feelings seem to want wording. The inventive and creative textuality of poem writing and motherese speaking index another sort of ethics of the non-real, in the way that words are stretched, reconfigured and reinvented (in secret) in order to challenge the norms of recognisability. In relation to the poetic use of a child-mother metaphor, we will return to the example of tough-speaking instructor, Christine, introduced above, and explore her surprising relationship with one horse, Jolly in more detail.

A poem 'From his human mother'

For the most part of Christine's life, horses were ultimately there to do a job, to answer to their human rider, to jump fences well, keep the rider safe, and win some ribbons. A close, communicative relationship was paramount in forging a competent partnership, and horses should be treated 'decently' she said, but it wasn't at all unusual to hear her refer to some horses as 'it' and to deplore others' oversentimentality. Jolly was not like any of the other horses Christine had owned. I never met Jolly, but as Christine and I got to know and like one another better, he was mentioned more and more frequently. He was the last horse that Christine had owned, perhaps the last horse she would ever own, and he had died a few months before my fieldwork began. Christine was still grieving. One day, when I had arrived at Christine's yard accompanying another fieldwork participant for their jumping lesson, Christine beckoned me away from the group. She wanted to give me something to look at, a poem she had written when Jolly died. She seemed embarrassed and flustered, thrusting a folded piece of A4 into my hands. “You'll think I'm bonkers,” she said: “Absolutely crazy I am. But there you go. That's what I wrote him. But you mustn't tell the others about that. It's just for your research. Horse and human bond and all that.”[34] She spoke as she was already walking away from me, disappearing around the corner. I could hear Christine back to her usual workmanlike, brisk cheeriness in the yard, checking as to whether her pupil was tacked up or not, as I stood in an odd and strangely exposed spot in the car park, reading an incredibly heart-felt poem entitled “To my Beautiful Boy from his human mother” (capitalisation as in the original). The poem tells of how the horse, now deceased, does not spend time with other equine angels cantering across the fields of paradise, but waits at the gate, as his mother waits on earth, until finally they are reunited and can enter heaven together. She later told me that it was an adaption of a poem she had been taught by her own mother when they lost a terrier that was particularly close to her as a child.[35]

[34]Christine gradually got braver about sharing the poem with others, and later published the poem online and gave me permission to use it in my research. Whole poem in appendix.

[35]This is relevant because animal persons were woven into Christine's life history such that her model for coping with grief through poetry, taught to her by her (human) mother, was in reference to the loss of an animal kin-like relation. This evidences Boyers argument (1996) against the 'familiarity thesis' (which states that people anthropomorphise because human-centred knowledge is more available and easier to grasp, so they apply it to the more alien non-human phenomena). To the contrary, Boyer asserts that humans are learning about the non-human world throughout their lives, not in a secondary way, or at a later stage.

As I finished reading, Christine darted back towards me to throw me some more of the story before hurrying away again proclaiming her own insanity. Jolly had been her baby, she said. She was his mother. She really was. That was how she loved him. That was how they were. She had kept him in the stable nearest to her house, and a security camera captured his stable doorway. Early in the morning, or late at night, he would look up at the camera and make faces, and she would see him on the monitor, and know that he was calling her out, and then she would come out and give him treats and spend time with him. His ashes now lived in a box in her bedroom room. All of this, and more, Christine told me in short, flustered sentences, bustling away again before I could really respond, asserting often, 'You'll say I'm mad!'

Motherhood is (sometimes) like horse owning

Christine's poem elucidates an authentically felt love for the horse, sometimes described as something like maternal love, that a few close and trusting participants discussed with me, with utmost sincerity. In some ways, such sincere maternalism is entirely understandable, in that British horse care and British child care have many commonalities. David Lancy emphasises the peculiar Euro-American tradition of valuing and doting on children compared to the variant ways in which childhood is handled around the world (2014). He demonstrates that Western parents obsess over their children's upbringing, endeavouring to create an idealised childhood environment of comfort, warmth, and fond memories. This, he calls a neontocracy, a society led by the needs of children, compared to a gerontocracy, wherein society answers predominantly to the needs of ancestors (2014:12). He links the tendency towards neontocracy to the moral import placed on individuality, each child represents a unique individual, with potential talents that must be nurtured and developed, a future of autonomous choice ahead of them (2014:161). Strathern offers some similar arguments, British children, she shows, are in some ways the *ultimate* individual, encompassing a future of choices, while their parents occupy a more tied and responsible position (1992:14-22). This is evident, for example, in the way children are known by personal name, while parents answer to a role-description 'mum' or 'dad', supporting roles, effectively, to the individual-coming-into-being that is the main event of the family. The most relevant aspect of both these analyses is the downward flow of responsibility and emotion from parent to child, it is expected that parents are more caring towards their children than the reverse, which is a fitting simile for equestrian relationships. Christine and her peers do report feeling loved *by* the horses

they feel maternal towards, but the love is not equal and certainly not symmetrical, the care and responsibility flows downward. Owners make sure their horses have enough to drink, balance their diet carefully, and arrange for vaccinations. They watch their horse's expressions and behaviours in order to learn about their likes and dislikes, some of which they shape towards civility, others of which they indulge as signs of the individual's true personality. I felt that Christine evidenced some, or all, of these aspects of the maternal position -nurturing a *particularly* special dependent individual - when she called herself Jolly's mother.

Jolly's role in his infantilisation

Yet these aspects suggest reasons that a maternal feeling might have resided in *Christine,* there is more to be said about Jolly's role here. The first time I met with Christine after the awkward poem-exchange-day, I asked her, “Why Jolly? Of all the horses you have bought and sold, why did this one become so special?” I was wondering – though I didn't explicitly ask - whether the correlating timing of the death of Christine's husband and the purchase of Jolly was relevant. Note, I was looking for an explanation that came from *her* end of the relationship, presuming it to be something of *Christine* which made it what it was. Her answer was surprising, and profound in adjusting my mindset. “Because he treated me like a mother” she said, with a tone that suggests this had surprised her, too.

I asked what she meant, she replied:

> When there was horseflies in the paddock, he would always run straight over to me to get them off him. If I was not there he would call for me and I knew what it would be, then he'd come to me and line himself up for me to get them off. When there was rain, he would play in the puddles, really, play, but only if I was watching, like he wanted me to see him doing it, to play with him, he could make me laugh and he loved it. He would paw in the puddle to splash it and then just look at me and then do it again. He liked his stable to be clean, when there was a dropping in there, he would bang on the door for me to clear it. But he had different bangs, he would do a different bang if he had run out of food. I have never known anything like it - he was communicating with me all the time - we understood one another. I wish you could have met him, Rosie, you would have loved him. He was something else!
>
> Field Notes, September 2016

In this statement, and our subsequent conversations, Christine emphasised Jolly's active role in establishing the terms of the relationship, he *treated* her like a mother. In doing so, she deflects an assumption among equestrians (and the British more broadly) that

infantilization, or anthropomorphism, is projected on animals from (somewhat dysfunctional) humans. Christine wanted to assert that she wasn't the sole author of this account, she didn't make it up, she was responsive, impinged upon, her motherhood answered an other's call, it was not projected from the inside, out. While this provides some evidence to suggest that Jolly offered something like a reflexive appeal, deliberately moving Christine to relate to him in a particular way, my focus is more centrally on the fact that this version of events is an important part of the way *Christine* accounted for herself when explaining the relationship. While Jolly's role is important, recounting it only partially manages to render the relationship believable, she seems barely able to believe how wonderful that relationship was, herself.

Stretching the word

Exploring the sensibility of Christine's account doesn't do justice to the rhetorical work she completes to manage the risky register of not-real that she is dealing in. She professed her craziness to me, she hid her poem from others; and within its text, we can see suggestions that giving an account of the relationship as a maternal one is not so easy. The title of the poem betrays the work that Christine puts into maintaining the cross-species maternal link. There would be no need, in a poem written by parents to a deceased human child, for the second half of the title sentence, “from his human mother”. The maternal link must be made explicitly and sits awkwardly on the reader's eye. This is a special sort of mother, not a garden-variety mother, but a cross species motherhood. Christine's humanness is marked out. In theory, we might suppose that Christine could have called the poem, “to my equine son”, marking out his equineness rather than her humanity in order to emphasise the species-crossing effort involved. Yet it is somehow unsurprising that the onus is on the *human* party to be marked out as capable of cross-species motherhood, rather than the equine party to be capable of being cross-species progeny. In all of the examples I gathered of horses’ owners referring to themselves as 'mums' and 'dads', never once did I hear a horse referred to as somebody’s 'son' or 'daughter'[36]. In resonance with Strathern's observations, the horse-child is individualised here, known by

[36]Though they could be referred to as 'baby', but this seems to already carry less literality than the terms son and daughter, one can be a romantic 'baby', for example, and we have the verb 'to baby', while son or daughter or even 'child' all seem to carry more of a kinship type link and were never used to describe a horse. To call a horse your child would be absurd, even as much as you might well call yourself his mum.

name rather than kin-term, while the responsible human takes on the role of kin-linked adult. Strathern points out that the adult has their own version of particular individualism, precisely in the flexibility of being known (by the child) as mum, but by other family memberships and in other constellations of relationships by other terms – there is a self that is not *only* 'mum' (1992:14-22). In the equestrian example, there is a similar expectation in the human-adult to have the capacity to be flexible in their subjectivities, relating to horses somewhat maternally across the species divide, in a way that horses are not expected to totally mirror. Regardless of the reasoning for the inconsistency (human mothers to horses who are not quite equine sons), the salient point is that the maternal link is not easy, there is something tentative and inconsistent, and the species distinction is subtly upheld.

In arguing that mentalistic terms referring to animals are not meant metaphorically in behavioural reports, Pamela Asquith elucidates the difference between metaphorical and literal description (1997). Literal descriptions, she contends, can be recognised as right or wrong according to whether the term has been used in line with the understanding of other common language speakers. In comparison, metaphorical terms can only be identified as appropriate or inappropriate, parasitic upon the literal meaning of the term. Here, it is unclear whether Christine's use of 'mother' is best understood as literal or metaphorical. The phrasing she used when she asserted to me, “I was his mother. That is how we were,” seemed to deliberately emphasise a *literality* to the term, particularly if we consider that this is Christine's experience of motherhood, there is nothing *more* suited to that term, and there is no term more suited to it (she neither had, nor wanted, human children). Christine is *more* Jolly's mother than 'cotton wool clouds' are made of cotton wool. She *was* his mother. She told me so. But, we conclude (from the rhetorical markers Christine provides, as well as from the normative species-bound categorisation she knows I share), this is not 'mother' in a normal sense. Asquith identifies, but doesn't elaborate on, a third type of word use: catachresis (1997:27-31). This term usually refers to words being used wrongly, but can also refer to instances where words are used deliberately outside of their usual usage in order to stretch, modify, or re-appropriate the literal term. I'd suggest Christine uses the term mother in a catachrestic way. Knowing she uses 'mother' outside of its normally appropriate meanings, she insists on a new authenticity, stretches its remits, and applies it literally. This is a new or different *sort* of motherhood, one which might render her crazy, but which is some sort of real none the less.

The word-stretching, creative, norm defying, self-risking work that Christine carries out (along with other sincere horse 'mothers'), on the borderlines of sensibility, can be seen as an ethical move. Judith Butler draws on Emanuel Levinas to demonstrate how encounters with others can reconfigure normative thematizations of recognisability, effectively causing subjects to reconsider their way of ordering the world (2005: 87-89, 128-129, 134-135). Language *should* yield to the incoherence of encounters, rather than relationships yielding to the constraining limits of legitimate description, Butler implores. Others have charted the ethical work completed by acts of word-making, for example, Webb Keane explains how feminists gave a new language to women's experiences of subordination, and with it, enabled them to recognise, legitimise, mobilise and inhabit an anger which changed the imaginable contours of ethical gender relations (2015:183-195). Carrithers argues that agents have at their hands the ability to not only present themselves to a public, but also to adapt and change their culture through creatively weaving rhetorical accounts, utilising and modifying pre-existing schemas, in response to the 'incessant' eventful nature of their lives (2005:580-582). Carrithers' rendition of rhetoric, looks in some ways like Butler's rendition of accounts of the self, one significant difference being that Carrithers appears optimistic about the capacity of his interlocutors to wield cultural schemas as tools at their bidding, while Butler depicts hers as free in as much as they are creative and reflexive, but always constrained, restricted, and at odds with the only forms of intelligibility available.

<u>Creatively managing scenes of address</u>

In terms of Christine's freedom to wield radical language, there is a clear disjuncture in the sincerity with which the relationship is communicated in the text of the poem, and the embarrassment and mitigations of madness with which it was presented in our face to face encounter. These are matters, in Butler's terms, of differing 'scenes of address' (2005: 50, 67): the social situations 'accounts of self' are made within. Christine understood well the risky legitimacy of infantilistic reports within the equestrian, and broader British context, in which she is speaking. She herself was a likely policer of the difference between fantasy and proper, responsible realism. She was able to counter the possible accusation of naivety through demonstrating her reflexive self-awareness in proclaiming her own absurdity, she *knows* this is abnormal, we *are* in agreement that the species usually/really are different, we do share that reality, she seems to assert. Yet at the same

time she appeals to me to bear witness to this special relationship, this real anomaly, that puts her sanity at risk. A few weeks later, Christine told me she had decided to publish the poem online, anonymously. The internet provided a more distanced, less face to face, and less familiar readership – Christine had been able to get her expressions 'out there' without any awkward exchanges with her close clients and equestrian friends. This is not to say they did not know how deeply Christine cared for Jolly, in fact, many steered me towards speaking with Christine about Jolly, knowing their 'bond was so close'. But the poetic, emotive, sincere textualization of maternal love expressed within the poem was deployed towards an online scene of address, as a management of the particularly risky and exposing form of 'not real' that it displayed. Christine's poem joined a number of other poems, often shared anonymously, about love for horses. Scores of poems can be found online as testaments to maternal love but also sometimes other sorts of love; quasi-romantic, deep friendship, or mystical and spiritual. Some were poems of thanks to the horse, expressions of trust, of hidden love, of the sharing of souls, or of wrenching grief after a horse had died. Sometimes poetic quotes or phrases were shared by my research participants on Facebook, with a few heartfelt words expressing trust, bond, or love, scrawled in a handwritten font next to close up images of the horse's eye, or of horse and rider on the beach. These images and words would collect hundreds of 'likes', were shared by many of my participants, but were never discussed face to face.

Illustration 6: Poem and image of love for the horse shared on Facebook

Illustration 7: Image of love for horses shared on Facebook

Illustration 8: "Horse breathes new life into my soul," image shared on Facebook.

In all of these cases, the important point is that Christine and these other poetic love-writers are not passive to the scenes of address which hold them accountable for their words. On the one hand, with Butler, we can see that Christine is limited in expressing her experience of relationship with Jolly in legitimate terms. On the other hand, she is able to construct and seize opportune scenes of address that enable her to search for a way to make this relationship part of a shared, worded, reality. She goes looking for ways to express the relationship, to make it speakable, hearable, and shared, even with the risks of madness or softness that accompany these attempts at earnestly speaking the not-legitimately-real. The speakers and writers in this section have worked to censor their words and to manage the scenes of address that will receive their heartfelt renditions. They have felt moved to speak in ways that challenge sensibility, speaking to those who cannot understand, or to audiences that will not directly respond, deviating terms from their recognised meanings, giving new forms of literality and legitimacy to fantastical experiences of meaningful encounters. Using language outside of its normative sensibilities enables novel relationships to emerge, that are somehow at odds with the logic of their time. In these examples language has not been deployed to communicate a referent meaning accurately and intentionally, rather, it has flowed 'from the heart', sometimes unconsciously, or defying conscious reason, expressing authentically felt affection in illegitimate terms, and enabling people to dwell on an experience of relatedness that does *not* quite make sense, perhaps even to them.

Conclusions

In contrast to studies which reject anthropomorphism as metaphor, I have investigated participants' practices of managing and evaluating not-real registers of knowledge as they relate to the horse/human distinction. In all of the cases above, the distinction between child and adult has been a useful way to construct ethical relatedness. Not least, this is because adults are understood to be better able to manage the complexity of not-real registers of knowledge (as in the distinction between human and animal, too). The distinction between human and horse is under constant reconsideration, as is the boundary between metaphor and reality. Still, consistently, in the examples above, horses are thought capable of *some* degree of reflexive communication. The idea of childlikeness enables riders to trace the choices and intentions of their horses with care and interest, and to experience loving relationships even when the sentiment is not symmetrically returned. It also enables riders to discount or demote their horses' resistances, considering them not quite accountable for their actions. However, the idea of childlikeness is managed *as* not-real in different ways, both within, and between, the three registers of speech described.

In each of the three sections above, I have demonstrated the management of not-real knowledge as ethical work. In the first section, an emerging taste for, and ethic of, metalinguistic reflection was seen in the way instructors instigate riders to 'watch their language', managing the tone, impact, and (sometimes) accuracy of what they said. The distinction between metaphor and literal description was less important than the distinction between harmful and helpful speech, the latter depicted the horse in a positive light and was solutions-focussed. In the second section, the language of tough love contributed to the cultivation of resilient, authoritative riders and bolstered a community of serious play. Irony, metaphor and trope enabled riders to develop complex multiperspectival accounts, garnering others' support and opinions, while deflecting the 'naked' accountability of sole-authored speech. Horses were described as teasing too, and the distinction between reality and fantasy was managed through tactful 'nudges' or straight-talking, brutal demands for the recognition of reality and the assignment of proper accountability. In section three, riders were drawn to speak in ways which they recognised as challenging reasonable and legitimate understandings of language, but which expressed sincerely felt emotions and authentically experienced relationships. This norm-bending practice was managed and censored in order to mitigate the risks of being

found wanting in handling the distinction between the real and the not-real. Debbie, Christine and I moved between different ways with words during our equestrian endeavours, and sometimes the distinctions between requirements of different audiences, or different moments, were jarring. This chapter has contributed to the broader aims of the thesis by describing the changing and challenging epistemological responsibilities that answer to the riskiness of verbal language. I have shown that equestrian relationships are figured out in words and performed through the evaluation and management of the not-real, such that we could describe metaphor (and its management) as part of the very substance of subjective relationships with really real equine persons, rather than a problematic appendage attached after the event in the imagination.

Chapter Five: Qualifying the centaur: Authority, engagement, and 'real connection'.

Introduction

In the previous chapters I have focussed on the ethics of understanding and representing horses, and the horse has largely featured as an enigmatic person-like thing to be understood and thought *about*. In contrast, this chapter brings aspects of the materiality of the horse/human relationship to the fore, investigating the way *thinking about* the horse is also a way of *being with* the horse. In this chapter, I will investigate the pedagogical processes that enable horse and rider to 'tune in' to one another, and I will attend to the capacity for riders to feel profound moments of 'togetherness' with their horses. Turning to the phenomena of embodied 'togetherness' at this stage in the thesis highlights the particularly interesting question of how experiences of embodied attunement emerge amid and despite the representationalist concerns that I have described to this point. This is an interesting question because the embodied ridden partnership between horse and human has featured in some posthuman performative scholarship as an exemplary case of non-propositional, responsive and relational knowing *with* (rather than about) an animal other. However, in my ethnography, participants quest to *qualify* ridden relatedness as a 'true connection' requires a sensitivity towards semiotic discourse as well as embodied practice. My aim is to situate riders’ experiences of embodied, 'true connection' with their horses within a gendered, technological and late modern context in which ideas about authenticity, engagement, and empowerment frame ridden partnership as a particularly seductive project for my participants. My first task is to introduce the sort of horse/human ridden 'togetherness' that this chapter is concerned with, and to orientate my approach in relation to posthumanist performative literature, before overviewing the structure and aims of the rest of the chapter.

While there are many shades of company and co-operation that riders experience and enjoy with their horses, in this chapter I am particularly interested in an enhanced, elaborated strain of heightened ridden co-operation and 'real connection' (also called 'true connection', 'really working', 'totally engaged' and more), that riders strive towards with their horses, yet infrequently obtain. Some of my participants invested more time and

money into the project of obtaining a highly 'schooled' close ridden connection than others, but all admired the ideal. Below are two particularly eloquent short excerpts of dialogue which function as an introduction to this ideal. In the first, I had asked Lorraine what she meant by the phrase 'engaged' (more to follow on this term later):

> It's the connection between you and the horse, it goes *[pause]* you feel *[pause]* at one with the horse, and your movement becomes [*pause- she seems to lift her body, as though her heart literally lifts in her ribcage and takes the rest of her body a few inches upward with it]* like cadence, you know that cadence, it's so rare to get cadence... then he can be, light, but at the same time, strong. There is not a downward pulling, no heaviness, there is an, it is upward, does that make sense? He's in tune, he's engaged, when they are like this they are 100% with you, there is a lightness and they are very attentive – so maybe the lightness is the way of – responding – of the movement ...I'm not even thinking about maintaining *[his posture]*, he's *there*, he's just *there*, and I don't need to play with it, because he's just there... It's togetherness. It's connection. A real, engaged moment, that feels so – complete.
>
> Dictaphone recording, April 2016.

In another example, Jodi, lamenting her troubled relationship with her current horse, told me about the best horse she ever owned, Henry:

> We were so in tune, it was like you could just feel everything he was going to do before he did it, it was like you would be cantering to a fence and you would just know when you would take off, like you were adjusting the rhythm to meet the fence right but it wasn't like you were adjusting him or like he was doing it, it was really like you were doing it together, like you couldn't even be sure whether he said to shorten or lengthen the stride or something, or if I did, it was like people would watch and say “did he learn the course?!” because I didn't have to even steer him from one fence to another we were that in tune. He was a dream. [pause] Honestly. It was like flying. [long pause] I will never have another horse like it.
>
> Dictaphone recording, August 2016

Notice in Lorraine's example, that Buddy's collaborative attitude is referenced at the same time as sensory and embodied details, so that responsiveness and attentiveness feature in congruence with lightness and strength. Notice also the vivid detail involved in the materiality of Buddy's being; he's *there*, he's just *there*, Lorraine asserts, evoking a spontaneity and immediacy to the experience. It is not thought about, approximated,

analysed (practices the previous chapters have described)- somehow his sheer material presence is particularly, notably apparent when he is 'engaged'. In Jodi's example, notice the blurring of self/other boundaries – such that ideas and movements are experienced as co-owned, co-produced, truly shared. Finally notice the sense of power, company, freedom, rightness, accomplishment, and almost euphoria that both women experience in this '100% withness.' These points will be revisited through this chapter as I aim to investigate the contextual elements which establish this sort of 'hyperreal' (Luhrmann 2012a, 2012b) relationality as a desirable possibility.

Equestrian endeavours and experiences such as those described above have proved themselves particularly apt for posthuman and especially performative analysis. Performative approaches stress that meanings, facts and values (for example, those pertaining to gender) are not found as essences in the world, nor as abstract ideas floating in human minds, rather they emerge and are 'congealed' through material-semiotic practices (e.g. Butler 1990). Posthuman performative scholars resist what they see as the monopoly of 'representationalist' approaches within the social sciences, that is, those that prioritise human-held meanings and conceive of them as ontologically distinct from the material world they refer to (Barad 2003, Birke 2007, Despret, 2004, 2013, Haraway 2008). Counter to this, performative approaches tend to emphasise the way boundaries between idea and thing, mind and body, self and other, human and non-human, or subject and object are blurred, inchoate, or continually configured anew through entangled relationships.

The equestrian example of togetherness evident in the above transcripts clearly lends itself towards such analysis. It exemplifies something akin to what Vincianne Despret calls 'the miracle of attunement' (2004:125) of responsive bodies, rather than the interpretation required in abstract arbitrary symbolisation, and it demonstrates a felt dissolution of the sort of self/other boundaries that Western dogma might be thought to presume (e.g. individualised minds that move and decipher personal bodies). Both Anne Game (2001, writing auto-ethnographically about horsemanship) and Kirilly Thomspon (2010, 2011, writing of Spanish mounted bullfighters) utilise the figure of the centaur in their performative accounts of the way horse/human relatedness defies normative self/other and mind/body distinction. Thompson describes an innate 'centaurability'

(2011:222) in both horse and human bodies that makes them *already* related and receptive to a particular sort of relation. This dismantles the idea of bounded, pre-existing species or subjects as the raw 'relata' (in Barad's terms 2003:812). In another example, Maurstad, Davies and Cowles describe riding as a 'co-becoming of horse and rider', emphasising the way horses and riders are re-made through their embodied relatedness in British and Swedish equestrianism (2013). Similarly, Despret (2004:113-115) uses the mutual attunement of horse and rider's bodies as an example of the potential for humans and non-humans to 'articulate' well (2004:122), since riders learn to responsively move *with*, rather than accurately think *about*, their intra-active partners.

However, there is a risk (or promise) that this sort of approach can end up naturalising and semiotically flattening the sorts of ridden connections that riders work towards and report. In fact, Donna Lee Davies and Anita Maurstad triumphantly report: 'Together rider and horse *flatten* or bridge not only the divides of animal/human but also those of nature/culture.' (2016:2) (my italics), and elsewhere suggest, 'concerning ...a naturalcultural language where body and mind are intra-acting with effects, the elements that riders speak of seem to cut cross sports and geography; they seem intrinsic to being with horses' (Maurstad, Davies and Cowles 2013:334).

In contrast, Nikki Savvides (2011) argues that approaches which emphasise the embodied connectivity of horse and rider repeat a gendered narrative, which romanticises an apparently natural affinity between women and horses. Savvides argues that while embodiment focussed accounts can describe well the idealised interpretations of riders, this ought to be balanced with a recognition of the experience, knowledge and hard work that is required in working towards (and perhaps never achieving) such experiences of connectedness. In relation to my project here, the important point is that a similarity between riders' symbolic apparatus and posthumanist performative analysis creates the possibility for what Gregory Bateson refers to as 'confusing the map with the territory' (1972:454). The fact that performativity-inspired scholars might argue that both maps and territories are material-semiotic assemblages is beside the point that they work on different registers of referentiality for those who use them. The map is judged right or wrong in its reference to the territory. In this thesis, as has been shown in previous chapters, representational concerns are very much a part of responsible relations with

horses, and so semiotically 'flat' accounts are unsatisfying, particularly if they deem what might *count* as 'active participation' somehow *more* of a material, natural matter than a discursive, semiotic one.

As will become clear throughout this chapter, horses are always intra-action[37] *partners* (to use Karen Barad's language, 2003) in relationships where 'true *partnership*' (to use a participant's term) is contested as a propositional fact. This distinction is similar to the difference that Joanna Latimer identifies between 'becoming-with' and 'becoming alongside' (2013); the former indexing a totalising hybrid (akin to the image of the centaur), the latter a looser and broader category of intra-action[38]. This means performative theories must be applied with particular care, because of the uncanny similarity, but important distinctions, in the vocabulary use of horse riders and material-semiotic performative analysis. This is particularly important with reference to terms such as 'collaboration', 'participants', 'partners', and the use of verbs which may/may not index intentionality, such as referring to a horse as 'teaching' the human how to move. This slipperiness between performative accounts and equestrian ones is the flip side of the felicitous point Maurstad, Davies and Cowles seem to celebrate, that, 'Riders seem to think and act in naturalcultural terms' (2013:325). However, this slipperiness provides not only a methodological risk to be managed but also a theoretical angle to be exploited. It invites me to ask about who/what *qualifies* certain material phenomena as certain sorts of meaningful (Navaro-Yashin 2009), such that the idea of true partnership with horses can be performed in various and particular ways by different parties (and simultaneously denied by others). I ask, how are representational concerns part of the entanglement that qualifies the idea/experience of true connection in British equestrianism? Looking at the active role of horses in the meaning-making process here, involves recognising the way they might play a part in performing a historically particular riskiness of truth and falsity.[39]

[37]Intra-action refers to partners who do not precede their relationship, who emerge within relatedness with one another.

[38]Though becoming-alongside is also an exclusive and ethically idealised category of intra-action. Latimer argues that becoming-alongside is more of a partial relatedness than the holistic hybridisation associated, at times, with Donna Haraway's becoming-with .

[39]This is not just about the horse playing a part which *is* misrepresented by the meaning-making practices of humans. To take the potential of performative theory to its full extent would be to recognise that the horse plays a part in the establishment of the *risk* of misrepresentation too. The horse can therefore be considered 'active' in the construction of itself as a (mis)represent-able subject.

The contribution that I would like to make towards this literature is to investigate horse/human ridden togetherness as a local exclusive *category* of relatedness, rather than as an exemplary case of intra-action. It is a very specific sort of togetherness that is highly demanding on both partners, that can be judged in terms of accuracy, and that is permeated with representational concerns. In sum, this chapter approaches some contemporary British ideas of 'truth' as they emerge through the experience of improving ridden partnership, in the form of true leadership, true engagement, and real connection. I set out to investigate what qualifies particular intra-active dynamics as 'true connections' by attending to pedagogical processes through which humans and horses learn (in unsymmetrical ways) how they ought to engage with one another. In the first section, 'developing authoritative affect,' I begin by demonstrating the high value given to the affective responsiveness that can occur between horse and rider, and then investigate the gendered dimensions involved in the cultivation of embodied authority as riders try to control the affect they transmit to their horses. In the next section, named 'evaluating true engagement,' I describe requirements placed on horses' bodies, which are intricately trained and moulded to optimise and maximise the capacity for complete, empowering 'engagement' (a local term). I relate the ongoing scrutiny of horses' bodies to a gendered discourse about (mis)representation and body aestheticization. In the third section, cultivating a feel for real', I demonstrate how riders work on being 'present in the skin', and explain that the idealised, vivid, 'hyperreal' aspect of true engagement emerges from, rather than defies, modern representational concerns. My argument is that the quest for true ridden connection is situated within a context where real connectivity features as a likely problematic with gendered dimensions, plagued by risks of misrepresentation, misunderstanding, disengagement and disempowerment. In contrast, the idea of a *real* embodied connectivity that could enhance all partners and authenticate a woman’s natural authority is idolised. Moments felt as clear, ethical, authentic, complete engagement, which feel vividly real, and empower both partners, are sacralised and sublime, but also treated with scepticism.

Developing authoritative affect

<u>The value of affective connection</u>

'Horses are practically telepathic,' riding instructor, Anne, told me in the car as we drove between her appointments. 'I don't say that to all of my clients, because I don't want them thinking I'm woo-woo, but if they are not *actually* telepathic, then you may as well think that they are, because they are *that* good at reading your thoughts.' She went on to tell me that she believes horses think in pictures, not words, and that they somehow have access to whatever their riders and handlers are picturing. If a rider pictures falling off, or pictures the horse spooking, or the horse jumping the fence just nicely, then the horse may well follow the picture, she told me. Anne's tentative theory of telepathic picture-reading was her personal version of a widespread recognition that the rider's thoughts and, especially, feelings infiltrate the riding relationship, often without the rider's awareness or consent. It was not entirely unusual that Anne had put this down to something 'woo-woo', as she put it, I heard others speculate on the uncanniness of horses' ability to access and respond to riders' hopes, fears, and expectations – which are more usually presumed private, internal matters.

Some rationalised this responsiveness as evidence of horses' exceptional sensory perception; their ability to 'read' and 'feel' very subtle changes in humans' bodily postures and tones of movement. Some grounded the somewhat spooky speculation that horses can know human souls with the ethological explanation that this was due to their nature as sociable herd animals, with heightened sensitivity toward the emotional states of those around them. Others, like Anne, were willing to leave it ultimately unresolved just *how* horses know so much of their riders' innermost thoughts and feelings. But most seemed to see horses as uniquely sensitive to human hearts, minds and souls, more so than other animals (even more than dogs, who were 'too forgiving' and 'too tame' one participant told me), and certainly more 'in tune' with emotional states than humans were. While this knowledge was widespread, it was nevertheless regularly remarked upon and remembered anew as particular circumstances led to revelations or warnings, via the barometer of the horse, about the mental state of the rider.

Riders' recognition that feelings can transmit across inter-species individuals is not

novel[40]. Similar phenomena have been studied in developmental psychology and neurology under the name of 'emotional contagion' (Panskepp and Panskepp 2013). Some ethologists and welfare scientists have argued for a sensitivity in the opposite direction; that humans have more access to animals' emotional registers than scientific methodology tends to allow (Bekoff and Pierce 2009, Whemelsfelder, Hunter, Mendl and Lawrence 2000). In congruence with this, Vincianne Despret refers to 'embodied empathy' (2013), sociologist Leslie Irvine uses the term 'vitality effects' (2008:138), and Ken Shapiro describes 'kinaesthetic empathy' (2008:33) to refer to the tone of movement in animal and human bodies that is available to others via mutual feeling, rather than cold, objective, interpretative analysis.

Experiences of equestrian shared feelings resonate particularly well with the 'affective turn'. Inspired by readings of Spinoza, Deleuze and Guatarri, researchers of affect are interested in the interpersonal, environmental and relational aspects of feelings that are more permeable, influential, emergent and atmospheric than personally felt, identifiable 'emotions' (Thrift 2004, 2008, Stewart 2011, Massumi 2002). Ethnomusicologist Ana Hofman claims, '[Affect] is embodied in the automatic reaction manifested in the skin, on the surface of the body and in the heartbeat, but it is still something that goes beyond the body, a passage from one experiential state of the body to another.... that body is not exclusively human, but can also be animal or plant, crowd or social body.' (2015:36).

Affect theory seems able to describe well the way humans and horses are 'moved' by encountering one another, particularly where this is experienced as unintentional. For example, Sarah told me:

> [After that lesson] I suddenly realised I am communicating with her the whole time. Whether or not I mean it, or whatever I think I am doing, I am actually communicating, because my body is communicating, and that is going to be influencing her...so, even how I breathe, it is linked to her breathing, so, like, we were both breathing quickly and sort of holding our breath, and she was speeding up, and I hadn't even noticed that it had happened until [the instructor] said, look at your breathing, and then we both started to breath and then she took this big sigh and I felt like a weight lifting and we both slowed down. It was amazing.
>
> Dictaphone recording, November 2015.

[40] though the ideas of specific thoughts/pictures transmitting as Anne describes is more radical.

The way Sarah uses the term 'communication' here is distinct from the models that focus on speaker intention and referentiality discussed in Chapter Four (see Duranti 2015). She explains becoming aware of, and amazed by, a sort of ongoing embodied influence that cannot be explained by the idea of deliberate, discrete, representational gestures. A similar recognition leads Thomas Csordas to reject the term 'body *language*,' which presumes some sort of code or grammar, instead he talks about 'intercorporeality' as 'languages *Other'* in order to emphasise that this sort of communication is not a non-speaking speaking, but something structured quite differently, quite at odds with a representational model (2008:114).

Affect theory seems to also capture well the experiences described in Chapter Three, where riders struggled to narrate the root cause of feelings of anxious unease; where did they come from? The horses' physical problems, or the riders' uncontrolled fear? The guilt-fear-anxiety that infiltrated the relationship was hard to name, hard to place, and hard to own. Similarly, a surge of excited-nervous energy could inhabit horse and rider problematically during the buzz of a horse show, or in the thrill-terror of a fast-paced gallop that got out of hand. On hot summer afternoons, horses and riders lazily plodded around shady hacks, sharing the hazy and atmospheric attunement (Stewart 2011) of calmness and warmth, while on brisk, windy, autumn days, both horse and rider were sharply alert and reactive, seemingly feeding off one another's brittle tension and the liveliness of the windy weather (inhabiting a responsive relatedness to the weather world, as described by Ingold 2010). And, in line with the excerpts which opened this chapter, the feelings of 'true togetherness', power, softness, and energy that riders report in sublime moments of real connection seem to exist with, rather than refer to, the horse's mindful movements during moments of centaur-like partnership. Game describes, 'Connectedness in living the image of the centaur comes of... letting go of self in order to be open to a connecting spirit.'
(2011:10.)

Game's language may be a little too poetic to gain favour with many of my participants, most of the time, (see Chapter Four), but it testifies to the way that this affective connection is emphasised and valued as almost divine. I am reminded here of John

Durham Peters' exploration of the history of American/British ideas of communication since the 19th Century (2012). He demonstrates historical moments where 'communication' (in various forms) has featured as a particularly seductive, and/or dangerous idea. He describes titillating excitement and genuine fear at the idea of some-or-other communicative mechanism or technology causing breakthroughs in the way personal thoughts might become more accessible and available to others. Hence an excitement about mind-reading is shadowed by fear of mind control. On the other hand, the limits of communicative mechanisms to live up to these ideals/horrors provides privacy and authority over one's own soul/mind, but also the impossibility of ever truly connecting - the melancholy of isolated solipsism. Peters demonstrates echoes of these 'good and evil twins of communication' reconfigured in different historical contexts (2012:12-16, 27). Using these ideas, we could suggest that affect theory and equestrian centaur-like togetherness both have a footing in this longstanding obsession with our capacities to communicate, particularly when articulated in comparison to the contemporary disembodied form of digital connectivity. Affect theory emphasises the fact that we are *already* communicatively connected – not only to one another but also to the world, through our *bodies*, thereby banishing the evil twin of solipsism, while the idea of centaur-like togetherness ritualises how complete and fulfilling that embodied-connecting can be if we recognise it and develop it in the right way.

<u>The horse as a mirror to the soul</u>

Riders spoke about the affective responsiveness of horses as though it was special; sometimes with awe, sometimes as though one is in on the secret. The non-representational, unintended, embodied and spontaneous nature of this sort of influence gave it an air of utmost authenticity, which could be productively contrasted against a cynicism regarding the sorts of 'facework' (Goffman 1955) expected from Facebook and other digital media and marketing platforms (Dalsgaard 2008). However, this heightened value and even sacredness of equestrian affective responsiveness does not provide equestrians with an alternative to theories of pre-existing, internalised subjectivity, as it does for affect theorists. Rather, equine mind-reading responsiveness compliments the idea of a true, hidden self or soul, with the idea that the horse has a special sort of access to it. Riders spoke to me about being their 'true self" around horses, compared to in their human relationships. They applauded the way that horses' responses to/with people could

flatten, rather than flatter, egos through rejecting riders whose wealth, looks, or other status symbols were meaningless to their mounts. They celebrated the way horses interrogated personal substance, rather than superficial representation. In Chapter One, I noted how this was welcomed particularly by women, who felt judged by horses on equal grounds to men – and not in line with their clothing or appearance. As Jill told me, “You either make a horse feel safe, or you don't.”

The 'horse responds to the real me' discourse emphasises three points; that there is a true self to be known, that this self is at risk of being unrecognised and impoverished, and that there is a (continually surprising) underlying connectivity of influence between horse and rider that can/should be honed and enhanced, rather than constructed from nothing. This creates an interesting mixture between the non-representationalism of something akin to affect theory on the one hand, and a heightened sense of personalised interiority on the other; evident most clearly in the popular phrase, “The horse is a mirror for the soul”. The idea of the soul as a mirror image, visible and accessible yet intangible and other-worldly, captures the uncanny exposure of interiority that riders experience in their horses’ responsiveness, while also celebrating, rather than negating, the existence of such a soul. Horse/rider affectivity enhances, rather than demolishes, the capacity for detailed self-reflection.

The idea of authentic, spontaneous, perhaps parrhesiastic (Foucault 1986) responses from the horse can provide the resource for certain projects of self-improvement. Riders and instructors try to shape dysfunctional affective responsiveness (guilt-fear-anger-anxiety-tension) towards centaur-like ends (confidence-harmony-balance-power-pride). In this process, affective, emergent responses are 'tamed' into name-able emotions (Massumi, 2002:219 from Wetherall 2013:354), cause and effect are distilled and a distinction between responsible human subject and responsive equine subject is often made. For example, in one riding lesson, a muscular, short legged, 'stressy' little horse, named 'Blackie' for his colour, jig-jogged in a sweaty frenzy, refusing his rider’s requests to calm down and walk. His rider/owner, Emma, looked equally tense, gripping onto the reins with white knuckles, her upper body buckled forward, and speaking in a high pitched, pinched voice, 'steady, steady, walk, walk now, come on, walk now,' she pleaded. Emma had only recently bought Blackie and things were not going well, both

horse and rider were becoming increasingly fraught, they just didn't click well, I was told, and they were bringing out the worst in each other. Her instructor tried her best to salvage the relationship with a stern lecture. Emma HAD to get control of her anxiety, she emphasised, because all of this tension was coming from *her*. Blackie was reacting to the tight reins, the gripping legs, and the fact Emma was barely breathing. She had to learn to breath, she had to trust the horse, and she had to let the reins go a bit. Using Karen Barad's language, we might say that as emotions and responsibilities are identified, 'agential cuts' are made that distinguish self from other, cause from effect (2003:815). The affective bundle of horse/rider nerves becomes partible, the fingers are a name-able part of the problem, as is the breathing. The rider's intentionality is called upon to get control of her nerves. What is 'made available' (Despret's language 2013:122-123) in this multispecies context is work to improve Emma's state management for the good of the relationship.

<u>Cultivating embodied authority</u>

One way in which riders work to control, organise, and enhance their affective influence on the horse is through the idea of 'holding intent', also known as 'meaning it'. The latter would be more associated with a traditionalist style of instruction, and the former with the alternative horsemanship system. The two terms are not entirely synonymous, but both refer to a particular way of moving with embodied conviction that has a largely positive influence on the horse. For example, both ideas were used to explain the phenomenon that I witnessed novice riders experience whereby their cues to the horse seem to fall on deaf ears, ignored by lifeless horses who then seem to suddenly spring to attendance as soon as the instructor mounts up to show the student what to do. In these cases, instructors sometimes clarified that the problem was not the accuracy of the novice's signals, but the novice's lack of 'clear intent' or ability to 'really mean it'. Bertie explained in one lesson, "It's no good just flapping your legs like that feebly, and thinking you have asked the horse to trot, you have to inspire him. You have to mean it. Don't be rough, it isn't about being tougher, you're only getting rough because you *don't believe* it will work. It's about just *trotting*, just going *trot* with your whole body, don't *think* about asking him, just really mean it, like it's definitely going to happen, no big deal, like *trot" [the instructor moved forward into a trot on his own feet as he said the command].*

Self-belief is one of many traits/skills that are recognised as having positive impacts on horses and are made available for development work through the equestrian encounter. Crucially, these traits are also valued in riders' human society, they include; authority, self-control, resilience, integrity, clarity, authenticity, humility, self-respect, awareness of others, initiative. In short, they are what broader contemporary British society might call 'leadership skills' (e.g. Telegraph article, “Leadership: The Eight Essential Skills”, Peacock 2013). These emotional/personal/social 'skills' are the focus of Bonnie Urciuoli's ethnographic exploration of the 'neoliberalisation of the self' in North American 'soft skills' corporate development programs (2008). She describes the worker-self-as-skills-bundle (2008:211) required by the contemporary labour force: flexible, resilient, and highly motivated. The 'neoliberal twist' she explains, is 'persuading workers that this is right, natural and empowering’ (2008:222). In the equestrian case, there is often little causal relationship between work on emotional comportment when riding and subsequent corporate success or value to the labour market. In fact, these equestrian endeavours are framed by participants as a sort of anti-work work, as an opportunity to develop a *more* meaningful, natural, authentic sort of interpersonal power than is afforded within the labour market. However, the neoliberal ethic described by Urciuoli is clearly present in the form of 'autonomation' and 'responsibilisation' (Rose 1992: eg.162) where riders develop 'state management' (as some riders call it) in order to maximise and optimise their influence and impact. Sometimes, similarities with working values are identified. For example, Lorraine told me about the central role her horse has played in her anger management, since in order to get him to 'go well', she had to learn to recognise and manage her own 'internal state' as she put it. “I am a much nicer person around him than I am at work,” she explained, “but I try to be the horsey-me at work if I can, to keep clear, and calm, and to keep it all together.”

The responsibilisation of riders' own 'state management' presents a daunting feat with many unsettling risks, reminiscent of Peters' evil twin that shadows the idea of transparent communication (2012). In attending to their affective impact on the horse, riders learn (and relearn) they are 'moved' by all sorts of environments, often in negative ways, and also that they are 'moving' others without their knowledge, and often with undesirable results. They discover that 'private' thoughts are actually accessible and

impactful. They may find they are 'thinking' in ways they didn't even realise. They are drawn to recognise that a bad day at work infiltrates their very being and infects their embodied presence in ways that the horse reveals. With this awareness, the horse can become like the panopticon (Foucault 1985:eg 202-203) of the riders' emotional composure and 'internal' attitude. Although this provides opportunities for self-development that can be empowering even outside of the stable yard, when things are going wrong, riders find their own thinking/feeling practices scrutinised as the site/cause of dysfunction. Even momentary lapses in the riders' commitment became remark-able failures in this material-semiotic context. For example, during jumping, even a half-formed version of the intrusive thought, “what if he stops?” would seem to find itself quickly, and brutally, answered: horses were seen as responding to riders' doubts by putting the brakes on in front of fences resulting in falls. This sort of affective responsiveness 'makes say-able' (to paraphrase Barad 2003:819) continuous evaluations and speculations about riders (lack of) belief and commitment in the felicity of their own commands. Horses seemed to reject hypocrisy, falsity, feeble-minded leadership, or two-faced communication, and rewarded authenticity, integrity, and genuine self-belief.

<u>'Holding intent' as a gendered concept</u>

Authenticity and self-belief feature in a gendered dynamic, in that women were considered particularly liable to need self-development in terms of establishing these leadership skills. Throughout my fieldwork, the empowerment of women towards leadership roles continued to feature in British media and political discourse as a significant and important challenge. Popular media engaged with scientific research that revealed 'cultural bias' in terms of the expectations on women’s working styles and capacities (e.g. BBC programme “Boys and Girls, Can Our Kids Go Gender Free?” Sept 2017), leading to a diffuse awareness that British women suffer from faults of self-deprecation as much as men are liable to over-inflation. This discourse often focussed on developing women’s *personal* attributes as the means for overcoming gender inequalities; echoing Anita Harris' description of the idea of 'can-do' girls, full of (appropriate) ambition (2004: 25, 13-47). Christina Scharff demonstrates that young British women in particular engage with the idea that they should be ambitious and resilient, individualising the responsibility to make things happen in their own futures (2016, also McRobbie 2009).

Like Scharff's participants, many horse riders were defiant about any expectation that women may well be lacking in confidence or plagued with self-doubts. This is a related, but distinct, phenomenon from the physical bravery and endurance known as 'not girly' that I have already described in Chapter One. Here, rather, I refer to the capacity to assume an embodied 'aura of authority' (to repurpose Michelle Rosaldo's term 1974:39, see Lugo 2000) that naturally commands respect. For example, Heidi told me about how horsemanship has helped her stand up for herself at work when she was being patronised by a male colleague: “I was like, Hey! I have found a way to get half a tonne of belligerent horse to respect me. *You,* Sir, will not be a problem!” Horsemanship enabled riders to orientate themselves variably against the expectation that women may struggle to hold authority, but it certainly didn't dissolve that expectation altogether. Occasionally 'meaning it' was referred to as 'manning up'. Those without the sufficient authority were referred to as 'wet' – which captures something of the undesirable embodied slackness, limpness and emotional permeability (to some extent, a form of girliness) that was to be avoided. Traditionalist instructor Bertie told me that many women are unable to 'feel comfortable' being in control, so they are more likely to either be pushed around or to get frustrated. “I'm not saying that’s right,” he qualified, “but it is the way it is, more often you have to give them [women] permission to really take control of the horse.”

During one residential alternative horsemanship course, instructors worked particularly explicitly on riders' ability to 'hold intent', which they described at various points as “being present”, “being grounded”, “having purpose”, “having self-confidence”, “inhabiting your own movements” “believing in yourself” and “being authentic”. One of the tutors, Sandra, told me of some cases where women had discovered 'their own power' which came in the form of 'a way to occupy personal space as though you have a complete right to be there, as though you *own* that space'. Sandra proudly explained that with these skills, women had gone home from the course to make massive changes in their lives – starting new careers, negotiating pay rises, renegotiating the terms of personal relationships, even ending them. 'YOU are worth listening to!' Sandra announced to one student whose horse was ignoring her. 'You ARE. But you are not going to be listened to unless you believe that... Imagine the most important you have ever felt, or better, imagine the most important person you personally know. How do they

move? How do they feel when they walk down the corridor? That is how you need to move to inspire this horse. He needs to be like, Oh Wow! Who is *She*?!' This sort of work on making the self authoritative in the right way – inspiring respect rather than pleading, negotiating or resorting to force- was an ongoing and central project for most equestrians, and an esteemed quality in talented riders.

Reflecting back on the descriptions of true connection transcribed at the start of this chapter, we can begin to see a specificity to the value of the experience. These moments index an accomplishment in cultivating a particular sort of connectivity which answers to both a fear of solipsism and yet also indexes an accomplishment in personal comportment. Against the societal risk that women will not know what they want in a clear enough way, or at least, will not be able to communicate or act on those wants authoritatively, moments of true connection are empowering as instances where riders' intentions are profoundly, positively impactful and realised in the composed, muscular, 'light, but strong' movements of/with the horse, so liberating it was 'like flying'.

Evaluating true engagement

The horse's body as communicative infrastructure

From first riding lessons to professional competition standards, riders work to improve the efficacy of their communication with the horse. This communication comes in various forms. The affective dynamics discussed above are one important aspect; another is the use of the rider's legs upon the horse's sides, the rider's 'seat' on the saddle and weight distribution, and the 'contact' between the horse's mouth, the metal bit, the reins, and the rider's hands. Novice riders may simply pull the right rein to go right, pull both reins to stop, and kick to go. All of these controls have to be taught to young horses who do not automatically offer the desired responses to these signals, and responses also have to be 'kept sharp' in older horses - who do not always turn right when the right rein is pulled. More advanced riders develop a subtle relationship with the aids: a centimetre of difference in the angle of the rein, or in the placement of the leg along the horse's ribs, can communicate transitions in speed, direction, pace, or posture to the horse, if the horse is prepared to understand and respond (Brandt 2004, Dashper 2016). Much riding and

horsemanship practice involves improving the horse’s response to communicative aids, as well as simultaneously developing his athleticism in order that horses and riders might be able to better perform the challenges of show jumping, eventing, dressage, or even pleasant hacking; the idea is that horses should be (using riders’ terms) supple, malleable, and soft.

Over the last two decades, riders have taken an increasingly keen interest in the biomechanics of the horse’s body, which is seen as the infrastructure through which their riding ambitions are met (e.g. Wanless 2008, Higgins and Martin, Moffet 2012, Swift 2014). The horse’s body is described as both a site of communication, and as a site of energy and power. An 'unbalanced' horse would be recognised as one who is not in full control of his/her body, but 'falling' round corners, 'dragging' himself along, or 'leaning' on the rider’s support through the reins. In contrast, a balanced horse is poised such that he or she is ready to change speed or direction, or adjust bodily posture (for example, bending in the opposite direction) quickly, without tension, and without losing composure. This takes strength as well as skill, on both horse and rider’s parts. Riding instructors, internet information pages, and riding manuals alike, explain that the horse's body must be organised in order to retain balance and to be able to respond quickly and softly to the movements the rider requests. The horse must have a well-developed 'top line' – which refers to the muscles that stretch from his ears, along his neck and back, to his tail. This enables him to arch his neck and shift his centre of gravity back towards the hind legs. From this position, the hind legs step further under the horse’s body, and act like springs that lift the horse and rider off the ground, giving more 'elevation' and 'power' to the movements. It is said that the horse has 'engaged' his hind end, or, more broadly, that 'he is nicely engaged''. The term 'engagement' is often used to describe this physical posture and mental attentiveness that are one and the same thing; the horse is ready to respond, attentive, and 'on the aids'. His body is in the right place, because/therefore his mind is ready to respond positively to any task he is given.

Tinkering and repair work

Walking past the arena with a wheelbarrow full of muck, as I did at least once every day, I might well witness a horse and rider in what looked like a private bubble of focussed responsiveness to one another, 'schooling' in the arena. The chances are I would go

unnoticed, feeling somehow awkward as an unacknowledged observer. Sometimes, being an accidental watcher here is no more problematic than, say, walking past an exercise class in a public space. But at other times, it is as though I have walked in on something like a musician's private practice of a difficult tune, or even a couple's talking therapy session.

When schooling, riders take up an expression of utmost concentration. Often, they are looking down at the horse's neck and shoulders and frowning with focus. Mostly, the adjustments that they make are subtle. Perhaps they complete a trot-canter transition (change of pace) that goes awry, the horse's head lifts, the rider's hands pull back, both look braced, all sense of harmony is lost for a few seconds. They may, in this instance, return to trot, to try again, more preparation, better timing, perhaps the rider tries to sit more squarely in the saddle, or to encourage the horse to bend his neck ever so slightly more to the left, perhaps subsequently the transition is improved. But not infrequently the repair work is more pronounced; a smack, or a few forced steps backwards might get the horse to 'listen better'. Returning to a slower pace and breaking the exercise down into smaller steps might help to clarify what was going wrong. Or the rider might lose their balance to varying degrees and actively have to regain it. The horse might buck, evade, or otherwise reprimand the rider (or at least, it could be interpreted thus).

Schooling is akin to the 'adaptive tinkering' (2010:15) Anne-Marie Mol describes in an ethics of care: 'Try again', she says, 'try something a bit different, be attentive' (2010:14). This is physically and mentally demanding work, things don't always get better as the session progresses, and any sort of progress is measured in micromoments; significant goals (getting a 65% score in a novice dressage test, perhaps) are set in months and years, not in days or weeks.

I describe this schooling as 'repair work', borrowing the phrase from linguistic anthropologist Emanuel Schegloff (1992). He uses the term to describe the way human-human conversation partners will alter the usual turn-taking exchange as they detect and repair any misunderstanding. Each turn communicates an understanding of the things that have previously been said, and of the other speaker's communicative intentions. Any rupture in shared understanding requires intervention of varying degrees of subtlety, and

maintaining a working conversation requires ongoing reflexivity and responsiveness. Schegloff argues that even everyday conversations can be seen as the site of ongoing, intersubjective work to establish a sense of shared reality. While the verbality of the exchange is central to Schegloff's theory, and, in contrast, equestrian communication is an ongoing embodied affair where 'turns' at speech are not particularly apparent, the phrase captures riders' continual readiness to the detection of problematic intersubjective dynamics, and ongoing attempts to repair them to reach a shared ease of communication.

Connecting, collecting, engaging.

Below is an extract from a riding lesson, demonstrating the ongoing task of working on the horse's posture and therefore also, improving communicative harmony.

> Come on your three-quarter line, and then over we go, that's it, yeah, you got your weight just right and he said "oh, that's what that means!" That's good. And again. Did you feel he was there, when he came against your hand? Yep. That again is when the steering is not happening enough from the seat and leg area, and he just gets a bit *against* your hand, and that, to be fair to you and him, he got a bit stretched in the tracking on the fence line, so it was a lack of balance issue rather than an obstinance.
> *[pause]*
> Yeah, good good good, we are getting there now. When he does give in – when he softens about everything, he is easy. Yep. That's it, now he's got a bit of a happier face about him and more of a swing in his stride. So, I think he is feeling a bit more comfortable now. When you were doing this before he was holding his tail quite a lot to the right, and now it is becoming softer, so I do think he was having a bit of an issue. Let's see him walk and let him have a stretch through. He is softer in this direction, do you feel that?
> *[pause]*
> Good, now try taking the circle a little bit smaller. And as he comes into the circle, be careful that he doesn't start to sag, he has to keep a little bit active in his hind leg to keep his back up. Head up, head up – you are both falling forward. Now don't pull back on him to correct or he'll block, yup, that's better, yeah, you feel the difference when he did a little - '*give*'? Then he comes through from behind for a stride or two?
>
> Dictaphone recording of a lesson with Anne and Cathy, November 2015

This exemplifies well the typical riding lesson work of dealing with a multitude of ruptures and dysfunctions; balance problems, comfort issues, communication break downs, attitude problems (on either horse or rider's part). Instructors sort ruptures into

one or other of these categories; it seems important, for example, for Anne to help Cathy acknowledge when the problem is the tracking in the arena compared to obstinance (to be fair to him, she says). We might call the tracking a 'mechanical' explanation and the obstinance a 'relational' one. In other instances, some of Anne's language manages to capture something like the 'vitality affects' Irvine describes (2008:138), elucidating the affective *tone* of the horse's movement and/or the texture of the sensory contact between horse and rider, while still leaving the exact intentionality of the horse vague. For example, when describing the horse as 'blocking' – it is unclear whether the block is a physical issue in the muscle fibres, a reflex, or misunderstanding, or a recalcitrant decision. All three sorts of description (relational, mechanical and 'tonal' – we might say) are common in riding lessons, often plaited into complex relationships with one another as in this example here. The point I would like to take from this is not only that riders and instructors maintain and utilise multiple ideas about the relationship between the horse's mind and movement, or body and ideas. Rather, I'd like to acknowledge how distinctive a goal it is, given this epistemological and technical apparatus, to reach a state where the *whole* of the horse's mind and body is pliable and receptive for favourable communicative responses, which is the ultimate aim.

What is striking about watching lessons with Anne is that the sort of togetherness riders seek is intricately detailed, with the horse and rider's mindful bodies appearing frequently fragmented into misfiring parts as the ruptures are identified and amended. Through intense scrutiny of the horse's body, riders/instructors are also invested in their horse's motivation, concentration, willingness, trust, intelligence, and understanding. Minute 'resistances' can be felt/found and worked out, sometimes this seems like massaging away a knot of tension in a muscle, or like talking an unwilling teenager into doing the washing up. True engagement is not just about achieving potential, but also about mitigating damage. A horse who is not 'working properly' is thought likely to be weakened or physically damaged by the riding process. The phrase 'not working properly' is meant in an intentional sense, akin to the way it might apply to undergrads (for example), rather than, say, car head lights. However, it benefits from the mechanical association and refers to the correctness of the body – a synonymous phrase is that the horse is/isn't 'using himself well'. What is made available to riders, in this material-semiotic apparatus, is a monumental and magnificent task of collecting, improving,

assembling, composing and connecting parts such that the rider can have an unreservedly communicative relationship with the *whole* horse, and reach a state of *complete* co-operation and mutual engagement. Riders often speak of 'gathering him up,' or 'getting him together', as though, uninfluenced, the horse's body and self is scattered, disarrayed, and misaligned, and unavailable for optimum connection and communication in that state.

Improving the horse's way of going is about increasing the horse's conscious connection with his own body, and at one and the same time, increasing his conscious connection with the rider's aids. It is therefore an awareness-raising exercise in which the horse learns to know his body, as well as an ongoing task of convincing him as to what he ought to do with it in order to achieve mutual benefit and flourishing. A common exercise involved raising wooden poles a few inches off the ground for horses to trot over in order to, "learn where his feet are". The most likely problem area with the horse's awareness of his body was thought to be the back legs, it was not uncommon for people to suggest the horse had "forgotten he had hind legs" or "he isn't connected to his hind legs", or to say they were trying to "get his brain to talk to his back end." The hind legs were considered the power-house of the horse, responsible for generating power and energy. Another likely area for attention was the horse's mouth, which was considered the area through which riders could communicate most subtly with the horse's mind, feeling through their fingers the way the horse was thinking. This work is known as 'improving the contact', and horses could 'take up the contact', 'resist' it or 'evade' it. "If you can get his mouth on side, his body will follow," was a common phrase. Another way of describing a good, engaged way of going was to refer to the 'connection between the hind legs and the mouth'. The aim being that the rider was able to create energy and power from the horse's hind legs as the 'engine', and then contain, control and direct that power through the 'softness' and acceptance of the horse's mouth. 'True connection' is when the horse actively, deliberately, willingly engages the *whole* body attentively and completely with the exercise at hand, bringing all of its sensitive complexity into alignment – thus enabling mutually enjoyable and meaningful feats that would never be possible without such training.

The word 'engagement' holds a cluster of related meanings in the British imaginary that

to some extent permeate the equestrian ideal: a romantic engagement, a mechanical engagement (engage the engine), a state of active participation, commitment, to be employed, coupled, and attentive. In contemporary usage, the term often features in negative form, in referring to the disengagement of youth with their future, the public disengagement with politics, or the disengagement of iPhone users who squander real face-to-face interactions. Engagement is a term which suggests profitability and progress too, both in cultivating consumers and workers. Online marketing vies not only for consumers to see their adverts, but to actively *engage* with them also. Ideas that surround equestrian engagement clearly resonate with Foucault's concept of biopower (1978: eg.140) , demonstrated in the phrase 'using himself well', as well the neoliberal ethic of optimising potential through self-awareness and concerted application to tasks (Harvey 2007, Rose 1998). One particularly interesting aspect of equestrian engagement is that the horse features not only as the focus of subjection (as might be more commonly expected for nonhuman biopower), but as the model for subjectification also; the horse emerges much like a human worker whose own self-perspective can be harnessed and empowered – the horse has to learn to apply his 'engine', his mind, and his feet to the task at hand. A second point of interest is that since the horse's true power is unleashed through his communicative accomplishments with people, equestrian engagement resonates with studies which recognise the way contemporary neoliberal markets value and even fetishize connectivity and communication as commodity (Cameron 2000, Urciouli 2008). As in those cases, the heightened value of connectivity is shadowed by the risk of being disconnected, or misconnected, and this plays out in scrutiny of the horse's body.

<u>Scrutiny of the body, is it enhanced or dominated?</u>

The equestrian world is on the look-out for ways in which the horse's body is not being used (or, more precisely, 'collected') in an optimal way, sometimes identifying a state of domination that can look alarmingly similar to real connection. This concern created a different sort of moralisation than debates over, say, whip-use or feeding regime. The particularly contentious aspect of working the horse in the wrong way was the possibility that what might *look like* a well-functioning, or even aesthetically pleasing shape (to some), could be hiding ugly truths and causing damage. In 2009, one top-level horse was

photographed with his mouth open – revealing his tongue turned blue from the pressure on the bit while in rollkür (extreme neck flexion) position. Given the sensitive moral relationship between riders and their horses' mouths/minds, it is unsurprising that the image of a strangulated tongue, hidden in the mouth of a top performing horse, was deeply shocking, revolting, and upsetting to my participants. Internet campaigns were still actively circulated during my fieldwork (see images 3 and 4 below). In 2010, due to public demand new guidelines were made by the governing body of equestrian sports (the FEI[41]) to give stewards new grounds on which to warn, or eliminate, riders who used force to achieve rollkür or hyperflexion in the warm up ring.

Images 9 and 10, shared on Facebook as part of antirollkur campaign.

After the 'blue tongue scandal', head positions of horses became an even more sensitised issue, and a cause for regular critique and anxiety about one's own and others' riding. The hot defensiveness and sharp critique around this subject spilled over into even fairly mild examples of the horse's body not being 'properly engaged.' Confrontations were

[41]Fédération Equestre Internationale

mostly limited to internet forums, with some online discussions becoming so heated they were reported in the paper printed equestrian magazines too. One commentator to a lively and vicious thread responding to a photo of a horse 'over bent' captures the general tone of critique, “It's sick. Dominating such a beautiful animal into an Unnatural (sic) position just for the sake of your ego and your trophy. Shame on you. Get an education and learn about your horse’s body before you break him for good.” In face to face encounters, critiques of 'over bending' and 'working the horse in a false shape' were less candid. The collecting ring at competitions was a key site for spotting acquaintances or strangers whose horse’s postures demonstrated signs of 'disengagement' (and therefore, potentially, abuse, and as a minimum, poor relationality). Problematic 'shapes' (neck too bent, hind legs not 'engaged') were criticised for being too 'artificial,' 'false,' and 'manufactured', and linked to the use of 'gadgets' – particular pieces of training tack that encouraged the horse into certain 'outlines'– rather than achieved through 'good feel'. A few participants, notably the most competitively successful, resented the aura of intense moralised critique, and felt the over bending issue gave an opportunity for 'keyboard warriors' to cause a drama and critique those who ride at a higher standard than them, with little awareness of what really makes a horse happy, comfortable or successful themselves. They argued that the extreme moralisation of head positions was unnecessary, that, when performed correctly, even 'deep stretches' of the horse’s neck could *enhance* horses’ capabilities, rather than dominating them.

In these efforts to scrutinise the engagement and shape of horses' bodies, there are resonances with broader British concerns about womens' consent, compliance, and coercive control, and with the challenges of differentiating between enhancing and dominating the body. Of course, one major difference is that in the equestrian example, it is the (often female) rider who takes the position of the potentially over-dominant party and the (often, castrated male) horse who is at risk. Others have linked the moulding of horses' bodies to the aestheticizing and controlling of women's bodies. For example, Linda Kohanov describes an emotional connection between women and horses on account of the fact both have a long history of having been 'broken in' by men (2001). She directly links sexual violence to training violences and suggests that women can intrinsically recognise horses as comrades, having both been subjected to physical domination despite their deep emotional capacities to bond and collaborate in a more harmonious way. Both Amanda Miejer (2008) and Gina Marlene Dorre (2002) describe

an affinity between Victorian women and horses, particularly the sympathy felt towards the fashionable restraint of horses' heads in bearing reins, given women's restraint through corsetry. Both were attempts to bind and control wilfulness as well as to aestheticize and tame natural flesh. I believe my participants would find this link uncomfortable, their concerns for the horse's body are rooted in the reality of the horse's needs, not in any symbolic reference to women-flesh. What is more, the unspoken echo of the power and ethics relating to riding, and those relating to sex would make my participants uneasy. While equestrian relationships involved a form of embodied intimacy and even love, they were absolutely *not* about interaction between sexualised bodies.[42] However, the head-position controversies seemed to me to tap into an emotional and moral register that resonated strongly with discourse about women's choices with their bodies, in terms of enhancement, engagement, aestheticization, passivity or even complicity. The salient risk was that either because of ignorance, or something more sinister in the desire for (the wrong sort of) control, seemingly harmonious – or even beautiful - relationships might in fact be damaging one of the partners, distorting their body, and inhibiting their true potential.

Recognising a false outline is not easy. It takes a discerning, experienced and talented eye to see the relational and mechanical problems in what might, to the less skilled, or the differently opinionated, look or feel like a good engagement. While crude faults are easily recognised – though hard to fix - there is kudos in being able to see the enigmatic fault in a generally well-functioning pair. Is the horse *really* working 'through' enough? Is he truly, completely, engaged? Has his stride been able to 'open up' to its full capacity? Is he *really* moving straight and even? Is there enough bounce and 'cadence'? Is the rider's seat or hands blocking the horse's potential for even better paces? Does his eye show true acceptance? Is he holding a positive tension in his body or a negative one? Is there sufficient 'elevation'? Communication between horse and rider is rarely good enough to be uncontentiously praised – winning scores in dressage competitions were often around 68%.

Maurstad, Davies and Cowles suggest that boundaries between horse and human are re-

[42]In fact, while I do not explore it here, perhaps this emphatically *non*-sexual embodied intimacy was part of the liberating appeal of horsemanship for women.

affirmed in moments of communication breakdown (2013:330-333). My ethnography differs in that the recognition *of* communication breakdown, resistance, falsity, or domination, is a matter of (expert) perspective, a highly educated, nuanced and contested affair (Schuurman and Franklin 2015[43]). The moralised scrutiny of horses' 'way of going' performs the *need* for a particular sort of moral/technical expertise when it comes to engaging the body. The ideal of true, empowering, engagement of the mindful body is performed as an epistemological risk with hidden depths of complexity, a worthy subject of ongoing contestation, problematisation and revelation. This provides women with grounds for continually working *at* (rather than working *out)* ideas about passivity, aestheticization, embodied power and choice. True engagement features as a virtuous goal with numerous barriers, not least of which is the semiotic passivity of horses with regards to what is said and known about them. Horses are not considered reliably capable of adjudicating riders' representation of them, but as potentially inadvertently participating in dysfunctional relationships which dominate and damage, or at least, do not enhance their true potential to flourish.

Reflecting back on the descriptions of true connection at the start of the chapter we can now see further specificities to the value of true connection. I have shown that horse and human bodies are understood and performed as made up of parts that do not usually connect in optimum ways, to themselves, to the world, or to the bodies of others. Riders' training practices demonstrate the belief that this state of affairs would be improved by greater *awareness* of those connectivities. True connection is a state in which the body is no longer problematically partible, and in which the *whole* horse/rider is actively co-operating in the task such that nothing is 'blocked' and everything is engaged well. It is also a state in which, despite such deliberate and active cultivation of the body and mind, both horse and riders' true selves flourish in the relationship, neither is dominated, over-aestheticised, or manufactured into falsity.

Developing a feel for real

[43]Nora Schuurman and Alen Franklin demonstrate how the horses resistant behaviour can act as a 'counter-performance' that either challenges the trainers performance of expertise, or contributes to it – as trainers are able to perform their own skill in handling *such* a difficult horse. I do not draw on them further here, because their own interpretation of equine behaviour is problematically straightforward. They perform their own expertise in determining what *really* counts as resistance/partnership and are cynical in relation to the trainers in their account.

'Feel' and attunement

To this point this chapter has drawn attention to embodied authority (on the part of the rider) and engagement (on the part of the horse) that riders cultivate in the quest for true connection. Managing and monitoring these projects involved a great deal of perceptive and proprioceptive skill: a 'tuning in' towards attending to both horse and riders' responsive bodies and the relatedness between them. 'Feel' is considered an elusive and valuable trait among horse riders. It refers to the perceptive capacity of the rider to be able to 'read' the horse's emotionality and intentionality through tactile perception, but also to the ability of the rider to generate the right tone and timing with their own bodies such that the horse is most likely to respond to cues in a harmonious way. Changes in either horse or human body create responses in the other, and a rider with good feel can work with, rather than against, this mutual dependency to forge a good 'way of going'. Amateur horse riders spoke about those with particularly good feel (mostly professionals, some aspiring young riders) with admiration, and sometimes envy. Much of their own riding practice, particularly in lessons, was about deliberately attempting to cultivate a good feel for the horse, at the same time as working on the horse's embodied engagement with the rider.

This sensitive attunement resonates with an ethic of responsive attentiveness that some scholars have advocated (e.g. as research practice, Taylor 2013). For example, Donna Haraway argues that the important concept is not (human, one-way) *responsibility*, but response-*ability* (2008:71). In this line of argument, ethics is not located in personal, cognised deduction nor in societal rules and norms, but in the mutual bodily responsiveness of people in 'contact zones' with one another, animals, or environments. This is about tuning into embodied *presence*, rather than *re*presentation, such that geographers Beth Greenhough and Emma Roe (2010) describe Haraway's ethics in line with the nonrepresentational ethics of dance theorist Derek McCormack (2003). His, like Haraway's is a *tactile* ethics, of bodily attentiveness and cultivated sensitivity.

Some anthropologists have reported this sort of attuned ethics ethnographically. Deborah Bird Rose conducted research in the Northern territories of Australia, and found an ethic of embodied attentiveness to the living environment among her research participants. She

emphasises that 'living responsibly requires one to take notice and to take care' (2007:91) In a similar vein, Naisargi Dave describes animal rights activists in India as 'witnessing' animal suffering (2014). This is more than simply seeing, it refers to moments where people recognise the animal through being 'present,' 'to root themselves when they might rather run or turn away' (2104:440). She describes how upon meeting a suffering horse, one of her participants was 'transformed, recognising in herself an ethical responsibility at the moment of seeing the animal other" (2014:441).

These ethics of attention tend to be situated in opposition with representational epistemology, and are often described as though immiscible with the oft-cited Cartesian distinction between thought and world, mind and body, self and other (e.g. Dave 2014:451, Greenhough and Roe 2010:43, Rose 2007). However, in this section I am going to show how the equestrian ethics of attuned 'feel' is situated within a modern context, and is cultivated through a complex relationship with representational thought.

The unfeeling body, the absent mind; disconnection from reality.

Schegloff describes the imperative to establish shared reality as a universal feature of human conversation (1992). However I am interested in the *particular* meaning and value of the establishing 'reality' in this context, and especially how it relates to the idea of intersubjective connection. In order to demonstrate this, I am going to turn to some ethnography of riders working on their 'feel' during horse-*less* workshops, where riders worked on the feeling capacity of their own bodies, while well away from the horses.

In a village hall, thirteen women, and one man, sat in three rows staring intently at the fifteenth student, Gemma, who was mounted upon a saddle, which was fastened on an artificial simulation of a horse. Teaching on mechanical horses is becoming increasingly popular, and some of the top of the range machines can move in a way that simulates different paces, and can detect pressure changes under the saddle, so as to give the rider a read out of what is really happening with their weight distribution during efforts to absorb the bouncy rhythm of the horse's back. This one, however, did not move, it was more of a rudimentary model, named 'Woody' after its principal component. Riding instructor, Julia, was saving up for a better model. Julia was small, slight, quick, and

gentle with a beady eye for detail. She was sparrow-like in the way she hopped around Gemma and Woody inspecting from every angle, head cocked to the side. Gemma's left leg was two inches shorter than her right, the result of a bad fall three years ago, which had left her with limited mobility in that leg. Gemma had attended the course with hopes of regaining something of her previous riding ability, which had been shattered by the fall. While her physical recovery had gone well, her riding skill had plateaued at a fraction of her previous competence, she didn't seem able to connect with her horse as she used to. She became tense, afraid and frustrated, she lost balance easily and felt herself gripping, she could barely turn to the right at all as her leg simply wouldn't give the aids she wanted it to, and her horse had become increasingly unruly. While the other students were able bodied, they were similar to Gemma in that each was frustrated that their body was not able *enough* to allow the form of connectivity they desired.

Julia began by asking Gemma to imagine Woody was to disappear into thin air, leaving her to fall to the ground. "Would she fall on her feet, her bottom, or her face?" She asked. Gemma took a moment to consider, and responded confidently that she would fall onto her face. The other students murmured in wonder. It was clear from their perspective that Gemma was tipping backwards, that she would fall onto her bottom. Julia confirmed this fact, bringing the audience into play in order to convince Gemma of the observation. "You are *worlds apart* from what is actually happening with your own body" she lamented. Later, Julia told me she often started with an exercise such as this, a very clear demonstration of how disconnected people are from their bodies. "You have to show them what they don't know, and then once they believe you on that, they are able to really work on establishing more of a feel." She explained. I see Julia's role, therefore, as cultivating a sense of ignorance (knowing what is not-known, Mair, Kelly and High 2012) as well as a sense of feel.

During the lesson, Julia often referred to a crises of connectivity between riders and their own bodies, which, I felt, mirrored the problem of connection between riders' bodies and their horses. "As riders, we need to be *in* our own body to feel it. You need to be *present* in your own skin. This is what most of us are missing. We don't connect with our bodies, so we cannot feel the horse," she emphasised, and then the plan; "I am going to give you a map, we are going to look for landmarks so that you know what is actually happening,

so that you know where you really are and what you are feeling.” Outside of the lesson, Julia spoke with me about the problems of disconnection that riders experienced. While particular traumas like Gemma’s made people more likely to 'absent' themselves from their own bodies, she felt most people were not really 'present'. Too stressed about work, or lost in their own ambitions, or running through their own fears, or stuck in negative patterns of bracing and ignoring and forcing their bodies in various ways. Too many were 'all in their own heads' or 'somewhere else entirely' she explained.

This dual work of recognising a form of embodied ignorance and replacing it with feel continued at increasingly subtle levels throughout the session. “Can you notice, if you close your eyes, how far down your body does your breath go?” Julia asked. Gemma was not sure. Julia placed her hands on Gemma's shoulders and shifted her a centimetre or so forward. “Well what about now, does the breath go further down your body, or less far than before?” she asked. Gemma tentatively tried, “Further”. “Good!” Julia confirmed. For several minutes Julia moved Gemma back to the old position, and forward again, until Gemma could reliably find the new position herself through recognising a change in the feeling of her breath when she was there. Then Julia moved onto new foci, with increasingly imaginative registers of sensory perception, “And are your hands lighter, or heavier, in this position?” then, “Does your thigh feel stuffed with feathers, or with clay?” and, “If your whole body was stuffed with peas, where is the point where the stuffing is leaking?”

Connecting (up/with/through) the partible, partial body

During this process, Gemma’s body was often rendered as-if a mindful person in its own right. “Bodies have muscle memory,” Julia said, “which means they *think* they know what they are doing. This can be a pain in the backside, because bodies can't talk so we can't tell them otherwise. But we have to negotiate with them. We have to ask them to try something different.” The conversational and interactional metaphor ran throughout, the body was treated as a sentient being (or collection of beings), waiting to be better known. “Ask your toes if they can speak with your knees" she said, at one point, and. “Gosh!” towards the end of the session, “You have *such* a clever body Gemma. You must be kind to it and thank it very much.” At one point, Julia explicitly made the metaphor between communicating with the rider’s body and with the horse. “We have to treat your body like a horse” she said.

“We have to show it what this good position affords it. We have to help it feel secure in the right place, when it is doing the right thing.”

In this work, the rider’s body was rendered partible and hard to know just as the horse’s body could also be, such that the job of composing these bodies was what Julia referred to as 'the ultimate multitask'. For example, when focusing on the feeling and position of her hands, Gemma 'detached' from her own breathing again, unable to organise both body parts at once. This mindful multitasking may be somewhat akin to learning any new embodied skill, until it becomes an unconsciously competent technique. However, the relational component of the equestrian project was particularly pronounced, the responsive horse and human bodies made 'feel' a moving target, susceptible to *ongoing* re-partibility and re-collection, quite different from learning to drive a car. Horse/rider embodied connectivity was performed and managed as a multifactorial, fragile, powerful interdependence not unlike a complex ecosystem, where 'balance' is a moving concept, and where tinkering creates unexpected consequences, and seems to inevitably reveal the fallibility of any attempt at holistic knowledge. Nonetheless, riders tried to cultivate an awareness and feel for the whole horse, via becoming better connected with the whole of the rider’s body. At the end of the session Gemma welled up with tears. She had never felt so in tune with her own body, she said, she felt she had discovered a 'powerful place to be' and she couldn't wait to see what it afforded her in terms of connecting with the horse.

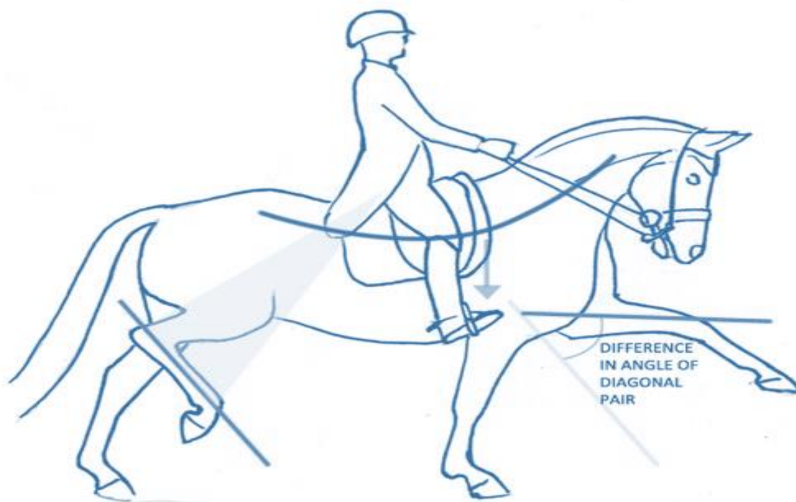
The horse-less workshop emphasises that the desire to connect with the horse is akin to the desire to better connect with, and through, the body, and I have begun to show that work to improve feel performs the crises of connectivity that it aims to overcome. In the more usual (ridden) riding lessons, I found the same themes of cultivating increasingly sensitive levels of ignorance (known not-knowing), and of recognising bodies as often misfiring and misconnected interdependent parts that needed collecting into harmonious wholes. This involves a complex relationship with modern ways of knowing. It is neither an exemplary case of Cartesian dualistic thinking, nor its opposite. While body parts might relate, think and even 'talk', and while there is a valorised dynamic of multispecies intersubjectivity and responsiveness, there is also a deep commitment to the idea of a real-reality that is hard to grasp, and an awkward solipsism to be grappled with in the

relationship between thoughts and bodies, selves and others, minds and worlds.

Objectification and third person stance

This commitment to the idea of enigmatic reality is evidenced in the prolific employment of a third-person perspective in the cultivation of 'feel'. Riding instructors were relied on heavily, most of my participants had lessons at least weekly, and all of them had lessons as often as they could afford (or a little more). Katherine Dashper describes the centrality of the horse-rider-instructor relationship as the 'triad' of equestrian pedagogy in which feel is taught (2016). In my ethnography, instructors were particularly valued for their ability to see or feel 'what is really happening' (sometimes riding the student's horse, but mostly watching from the ground). 'People have no idea what is going on underneath them,' Anne said, exasperated by another bunch of challenging lessons. 'They think it feels great, and you are looking and thinking, where am I even going to *start* unpicking this?!' But instructors are not the only source of third-person stance (and of course, instructors are also open to critique, not always trusted to get at the real relationship). Many riding arenas' contain at least one wall of mirrors, such that riders can glance up and see whether their knee is really where they think it is, or whether the horse looks as good or bad as he feels. An outside view, 'from the ground', is endemic to the idea of the real relationship. In books and internet pages, pedagogic diagrams of what horse and rider ought to look like almost invariably utilise a side-on, observer's view (as in illustration 12), and very occasionally, a birds eye, top down perspective that captures the *real* degree of straightness, for example. Diagrams never picture the horse's neck and head from the rider's perspective. Riders must reflect on the relationship from the outside, in order to continually calibrate and improve what they are feeling on the inside. Regular competition is valued by riders as another way of measuring how the relationship is *really* progressing, against other competitors, and against past performance, via scores and judges' comments (which, again, are open to critique).

Parallel Diagonals
The Proof of Correct Training



Disunited diagonal pairs, showing more than 45 degrees difference in the angle of the trajectory.

This spreading of the diagonal pairs is only possible when the horse's back is dropped.

The hind leg does not reach forward to support the lifting of the horse's back, and the rider sits on the compressed vertebrae of the hollow thoracic spine.

Despite appearances, the horse is on the forehand.

In correct postural engagement, the diagonal pairs (identified by the angle of the hindleg cannon bone and the forearm of the front leg) are absolutely parallel, at all points in the stride.

This is a sign of the unity provided by the postural ring, connecting the haunches and the forehand, and allowing the energy to flow freely from back to front.

The hindleg reaches under to support the lifting of the horse's spine under the rider.

www.happy-horse-training.com

Internet based educational resource, happy horse training.com, offer a large number of diagrams demonstrating different aspects of correct training/riding. All feature 'outside perspective', as here

Webb Keane describes the third person stance as a central element of human ethical conduct, because it is from this stance that generalisations can be made, such that phenomena are 'objectified', which means, for Keane, rendered recognisable in explicit terms (2010:69, 2015:67). For Eduardo Kohn, too, despite his interest in non-symbolic, more-than-human registers of communication, it is the generalising and representational capacity of 'thirdness'[44] that enables humans alone to inhabit moral worlds (2013:5, 60). However, my aim is not to analyse the role of thirdness in general, so much as to emphasise the particularly complex employment of it for the ethical project of developing feel. The cultivation of feel for real connection relies upon a representational way of considering thought distinct from material reality, in order to calibrate the senses and convince the mind to better inhabit the 'skin' of the body.

While riders continually re-evaluate themselves in relation to the horse when riding, by glancing into the mirror, or reflexively responding to the horse's errors, or listening to the instructor's advice, they also recognise 'overthinking' as impeding the potential to connect with the horse, and they valorise those rare moments in which they *aren't* having to work at it, evaluate, interpret, and consciously adjust. The ideal, in fact, is to turn the triad of horse, rider and observer-of reality (instructor, or reflective self) into a *dyad* of merged horse and rider in complete connection, that is, to lose the need for thirdness, even as that need has been emphasised.

Hyperreal horses and cultivated ignorance as linked, modern phenomena

In examining Californian Vineyard Christians' desire (and sometimes ability) to experience God as a 'hyperreal' material presence (2012a:301), Tanya Luhrmann has shown that increased attention towards detailed sensory perceptions can create experiences of vivid reality she calls 'absorption'[45] (2012a:200-201). Crucially, for Luhrmann, Vineyard Christians' absorption in experiences of God is related to their culturally held beliefs about knowledge and the mind (2012b:378). The presumed 'boundedness' of minds, the 'interiority' of experience, and an 'epistemological stance' that recognises plurality of beliefs (2012b:383), all feature in the way God is engaged

[44]Here, he uses the semiotics of Charles Pierce.
[45]She adapts Tellegen and Atkinson's psychological term 1974.

with explicitly 'as if' he was a really present friend (2012a:74-78, 2012b:375, 378). In Vineyard Christians' projects of coming to know God more completely, the imagination is employed and tuned in order that the mind might be opened up towards allowing God in (2012a:196).

Scepticism is an integral part of the project. Vineyard Christians work specifically to overcome a *societal* scepticism that, they argue, renders minds unable to be open towards the presence of a transcendental God, even when he is personally believed in (2012a:e.g.314). Scepticism is also employed, and honed, during the project of trying to hear God's voice, as students seek support from one another, or interrogate themselves, to evaluate which of their tentative experiences of presence are *really* God (2012a:63-67). Though honing the imagination towards experiencing a real that is not straightforwardly sense-able, Lurhmann's participants pay extreme attention toward their perceptive senses (try to imagine, in great sensory detail, what it would have been like to walk with Jesus, for example) and occasionally, this enables spontaneous, vivid, material sensations of God's voice, hand, or presence that are experienced as immediately and immanently real beyond doubt, without interpretation, analyses or evaluation. The value of this form of really-real God, and the work done to experience Him as such, are wholly modern phenomena, Luhrmann argues, "This near-magical God is an expression of what it is to be modern" (2012a:301).

Clearly, there are significant differences between horses and God as interaction partners (their materiality, for one). However, what I find interesting about relating Luhrmann's use of absorption to the ethnography in this chapter is not just that it helps to explain how some moments of connection can appear so vividly real *despite* riders' high sensitivity towards epistemological challenges in knowing the horse. Rather, moments of hyperreal absorption are enabled precisely within a context of epistemological doubt, by the subsequent work that is taken on to make the *real* horse (or God) directly knowable through imaginative work to tune the senses, as seen, for example, in the tinkering repair work and the riderless workshop described above. This supports my argument that the ethical project of developing feel does not evidence an *alternative* to representational knowing, but is an intimate and complex engagement with it.

This is evidenced most clearly when we recognise the precariousness of any such experiences of holistic, dyadic, complete, real togetherness. The standards of what might *count* as real connection are pushed higher and higher as (or rather, if) riders improve, such that competent riders do not consider themselves experiencing real, complete connection most of the time. Rather, they have a more detailed, deep, and complex understanding of the nuances of connectivity that still evade them. They perform a more sophisticated cultivation of ignorance, but still, schooling time is spent deeply involved and invested in the known not-knowns, in what is not quite grasped, in the question of the connectivity they *cannot quite feel,* or the communication that is not quite shared. This was clear, for example, when Bertie looked at old photographs with me, and stopped for several seconds, transfixed by an image of himself competing at a show. That moment had felt amazing, he said, like such a connection between him and the horse, and like really good engagement and lightness. Now he could see the horse really wasn't moving that well at all, and his own hands were 'too heavy'. “It just shows how much you keep learning” he concluded.

In this phrasing, Bertie tapped into a diffuse idea among my participants of the never-ending learning project that was the relationship with the horse. At times, this learning was fraught, critical and urgent, and at others, it was tinkering, playing, and nurturing. While there were precious moments that surpassed the need for critical interpretation, nevertheless, the project of knowing/feeling the horse a bit more, a bit better, was never done.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that my participants’ conception of real connection with the horse is a highly particular, valued, exclusive category of relatedness. The concept of true connection gains traction through the idea that while complex connectivity advances to hidden and incredible depths, *optimum* connectivity is elusive and unlikely. True connection is not (only) an example of the ways in which all life is embedded in responsive, co-constructive/destructive entanglements, but is the enhancement of that state through the accomplishment of a distinctive set of relational skills. My aim has not been to argue against performative theory of human/animal connectivity per se, but to argue that British horse riders do not perform profound connectivity as an *alternative* to,

or *negation of* the Cartesian dualisms associated with representational thinking. Rather, I have shown the quest for true connection involves a deep, complex engagement with representational registers of knowing. In contrast to the descriptions of relatedness typical of performative theorists or nonrepresentational ethicists, my participants demonstrated both a commitment to the idea of the objectively *real,* and a valorisation of the idea of the well-functioning *whole.* In section one, I demonstrated how affective connectedness is sacralised as a mystical phenomenon, but also identified as a risk to subsequent personal responsibility. Ones' affective impact should be known, curtailed, composed, and harnessed. I showed how riders work on the holistic integrity and authenticity of their communications with the horse, particularly in the development of embodied authority – 'meaning' what you say– an aim considered particularly relevant for women. In section two I demonstrated the aim of engaging the whole of the horse's mind and body, which emphasised the detailed partibility of horses' bodies during scrutiny of 'way of going'. I showed the risky relationship between the ideal of enhanced embodied engagement and the (gendered) danger of domination, misrepresentation, and damage. In section three I have shown work to cultivate 'feel' demonstrates a crises of connectivity with, and through, the body, such that riders aim to be more 'present' in their own skin, more 'in the moment' and more aware of their internal and external connectivity. I have shown riders' reliance on third-person objectivity, and on calibrating internal 'feel' to externally recognisable reality, even as the ideal of true connection is to experience such connectedness that representational mediation and personal reflexivity is momentarily redundant. In sum, I have argued that the quest for *real* ridden connectedness responds to, and recreates, a felt need for hyperreal, empowering, naturally ethical engagement and I have situated that need within a particular gendered, late modern context.

Conclusion

I have shown that the project of achieving 'real connection' with the horse is a highly specific aim, situated within a particular classed, gendered, and epistemological environment, where 'truth' and connectivity hold peculiar import, and where (particularly women's) ambitions are drawn towards the potential affordances of empowering togetherness that horses provide. In this conclusion I will draw together evidence from the preceding chapters and clarify my argument that British amateur equestrians' ethical relationships with their horses involve a complex mastery of, rather than negation of, Cartesian dualistic thinking. I will also summerise the complex relationship that has emerged throughout the thesis between the concepts of choice and nature. I will offer some concluding remarks on the role of verbal language within ethical relationships with non-verbal beings, and I will argue for the contribution that multispecies ethnography can offer to the anthropology of ethics.

'Modern' epistemology and embodied, ethical, multispecies relationships

Both the recent 'animal turn' and 'ethical turn' in anthropology have contributed toward 'provincialising' (Chakrabarti 1992) epistemological patterns associated with modernity, and proposing alternatives. Individualisation, rationality, objectivity, detachment, and representationalism are notable terms among a constellation of concepts that are treated with caution, or disbanded entirely, by anthropologists whose admirable goals are to account for non-Western people on their own terms, or, alternatively, to better attend to the way in which Western people really live (or even, might live better).

As described in the introduction, a critique of modern epistemology has been especially foundational to the emergence of the animal turn (Mullin 2002). Multispecies studies often frame their theoretical standpoint through explicit antagonism with the oft-cited Cartesian dualistic distinctions, between mind and body, self and other, human and non-human (e.g. Locke and Muster 2015:1). However, I have demonstrated a number of epistemological practices that carry hallmarks of 'modern' dualistic thinking integrated within embodied registers of knowing, and intersubjective, multispecies, co-constructive dynamics. I have shown that these relational dynamics are sometimes at odds with the anti-modernism of the animal turn. In Chapter Two, I demonstrated the specific forms of

'open-mindedness' that British amateur horse riders practised and promoted. While at first glance, this appeared harmonious with the variant use of the term 'open' by some multispecies authors (Ingold 2000, 2006, Haraway 2003, 2008, Locke 2017), in fact, I showed an incompatibility. Riders were less concerned with the distinction between subjectivity and objectivity; presuming horses to be capable of social relationships, they were invested in ascertaining precisely (accurately, objectively) what *sort* of ethical relatedness each encounter demonstrated.

In Chapter Three, I argued that British amateur horse riders value and utilise the idea of distinct individuals, even as those individuals are recognisable through the intersubjective practice of constructing plots, in which characters are formed in relation to one another. I showed that while Haraway proposes multispecies entanglement and co-becoming as an alternative to the idea of the rational, reflexive, self-constructing individual, in fact, it was in moments that *felt* particularly inchoate that riders were most likely to 'stand back' and analyse in an abstract sense, unable to act until a degree of narrative coherence – and individual distinction – could ground their thoughts and movements.

In Chapter Four I showed that metaphorical registers of knowing are not necessarily or fundamentally more 'detached' (in the broadest sense) than ontological versions. I showed various ways in which the management of the not-real is an ethical practice. Not-real ways of speaking enabled riders to hone their embodied movements and communicate something of the tone of a relationship. Speaking not-real knowledge about horses also allowed riders to work out, and work at, how to know horses, sometimes through yielding to (learning from) the norms of legitimate discourse and sometimes through challenging or playing with them.

In Chapter Five, I demonstrated various ways in which riders consider human and horse bodies to carry enticing potential for profound connectivity, but persistent problems too. While performative strands of multispecies literature have utilised examples of responsive embodied relationships with animals as an alternative to representational ways of thinking, I argued that in this ethnographic instance, the embodied relationship was inseparable from the representational concerns that co-exist with it. In the ethnography presented in this chapter, embodied registers of knowing are performed as fallible and

vulnerable as well as sacralised and utopian if accomplished correctly. Representational concerns abound: that (particularly female) riders won't be able to compose and communicate their intentions clearly through their bodies, that horse bodies might be mis-read, misrepresented, and dominated and damaged as a result, and that riders' bodies might not be able to feel what is really going on with the connectivity they are part of. Ironically, the reliance on a third-person perspective to mitigate these concerns is as trenchant as the desire to connect completely and dyadically, unmediated by reflexive thought, third-person evaluation, and critical interpretative analysis.

Through attending to the embodied skills and experiences of my participants, I have also demonstrated that 'knowing well' in this context operates on two levels: the effective and the accurate. By 'effective,' I am refering to the capacity to hone and compose the dynamic of affective responsiveness between horse and rider. Effective ways of thinking during interaction with horses were not dithering, doubting, or reserved – traits which left bodies brittle, withdrawn, static and pensive. Effective epistemology while riding or handling horses was positive, spontaneous, optimistic, and involved moving with conviction, but also ongoing interest, 'feel', flexibility, and humility. This observation mirrors Vinciane Despret's assertion that thinking bodies are always also interacting bodies, that knowing is always a knowing *with* (2004, 2013, 2016). This argument leads Despret to reject the scientific quest for accurate knowledge that involves withdrawing or denying scientists' affective bodies (e.g. 2004:121). However, in my ethnography, British horse riders cared about accurate knowledge, objective truth *and* embodied affectivity and effectivity. The very challenge of riding was managing what you don't yet know at the same time as managing thinking-practice as an interactional skill.

In sum, I have shown that British amateur horse riders' ethical relationships with their horses demonstrate an engaged, complex, and sometimes ambiguous relationship with the constellation of epistemological traits often associated with modernity and Cartesian dualism. That dualism has not featured in participants' conceptual apparatus in a stable and coherent sense. I have shown instances where riders consider their bodies as 'talking', where selves are co-constructed with others, where species boundaries are under constant reconsideration, and where the privacy of the rider's 'soul' seeps out and infects their horse's body. However, I also haven't found Cartesian dualisms irrevocably 'blurred', dispanded, or surpassed. I have described a deep commitment to the idea that reality is

distinct from fallible thoughts about it, that others' minds are never transparent (enough), that individuals are natural units of distinction – and that human individuals are responsible for what they choose, and how they know. The ethnography presented here is testament to the variety of 'detached' forms of thinking at play even in 'relational' settings (Candea, Cook, Trundle and Yarrow 2015, see also Neumark 2017). I hope to have shown that there is merit in attending to ethical epistemological practices as, on the one hand, the varied means of conducting ethical self-evaluating projects, and on the other, the ethical substance to be cultivated and valued, such that certain ways of thinking are considered virtuous in themselves (as in the metareflexivity in Chapter Four, for example). Further research of this type is necessary to enable comprehensive comparative work to ascertain the prevalence, distribution and variety of ethical epistemological traits similar to those described here, including to what extent we might consider these traits uniquely 'modern' phenomena. This call is harmonious with that made by Didier Fassin, who advocates a closer attendance to consequentialist ethical practices, which, presumably, may well involve a simultaneous commitment to the idea of establishing 'real' (2014:432-433).

Choice, nature and real connection.

The epistemological responsibility that I have described among British amateur horse riders is bound up in the awkward relationship between the concepts of choice and nature, and a related desire to be better in touch with reality as well as better connected. I introduced this conceptual tension in Chapter One, where I demonstrated that while riders greatly value the idea of individual choice, they often legitimise choices through the idiom of nature. This was evident in the case of women who were proud of the independence their equestrianism involved, yet apt to reinstate essentialistic views about the natural emotionality of gendered bodies in bolstering their sense of belonging. I described 'each to their own' as an ethic that celebrated individual variety, yet, at the same time, choice seemed to act as a risky mechanism for building resilient relationships, too many options were associated with community breakdown, and real belonging to horsey worlds was figured as 'in the bones' and 'part of the soul', a *natural* phenomenon that *had* to be actively pursued.

This awkward and important relationship between choice and nature can be traced throughout the thesis, and was regularly related to riders' desire to connect – and for that

connection to be *real*. One regular theme throughout the ethnography involves the idea that relationships are constituted by the choices of the partners, and that a true connection is one that both partners freely choose. This theme was evident in Chapter Two, where riders were keen to emphasise and work towards their own epistemological independence, but were also (sometimes, in variant ways) invested in the idea that the horse ought to be a free thinking, choosing partner within the relationship. For some, very compliant behaviour was considered evidence of programmatic training rather than a real relationship. The provocation was that horses ought to look like active choosers in order for the connection to be a good one. A similar theme was repeated in Chapter Three, where resistant behaviour was not considered problematic for the quality of the relationship at all, if it were diagnosed as pain, becoming a matter of nature, rather than choice. However, if bad equine behaviour was considered willful, it was incumberent on riders to apply their own strength of mind, possibly overcoming their embodied fearfulness with sheer grit, in convincing the horse to choose differently. We have seen, at multiple points, riders' tactics for training the horse to make *better* choices for the sake of developing the ridden relationship (Chapters Two, Three, and Five). Rebecca Cassidy described her Newmarket racing participants as tracing the bloodlines of horses and humans creatively in order to enhance a sense of exclusive belonging (2002:33). In contrast, this thesis demonstrates my participants' propensity to trace *choices* creatively in order to evaluate and legitimise the constitution of the connectivity they forge with the horse. Chapter Four, for example, evidences the way riders can obsess over continually defining and working out what sort of choices the horses' behaviour indexes, the child-like frame proved useful in affording the horse choices of great import while simultaneously mitigating moral legitimacy.

A second theme which emerges is anxiety around the responsibility riders carry to recognise the real relationship they are involved in. One common problem riders evoked is that they may have too *much* freedom in the way that they can construct the horse (in the epistemological, and physical, notions of the term 'construct'). We saw this in Chapter Two where alternative and traditional training systems each harboured critiques that the other was too artificial, too invented, not true enough to the real needs of the horse. Similar fears were evident in Chapter Three, regarding the possibility of projection, and Chapter Four, in terms of infantilisation; each case performed a risk that the horse can become fantasised as an object of mere human whim. In Chapter Five, a similar danger

was most clearly evident in the critique of rollkur and the threat of over-aestheticising horses' bodies, making them into objects for human tastes, rather than forging real connections. In these cases, the invocation is that people ought to yield more to nature, ought to respect and seek out the underlying realities of the natural relatedness they are entangled within in order to realise real connectedness.

Human choice is not only performed as threatening to nature, but also at times, as futile in the face of it. The whole project of obtaining a real connection with the horse is imbued with a sense of authenticity by virtue of the fact that horses reportedly *won't* yield just because riders want them to. They will not flatter. This idea was cherished and oft repeated among my participants, who were likely to tell me why *their* horse in particular was strong minded, complex, crazy, full of attitude, and would be *impossible* to dominate. British horses, at times, embody the idea of a romantically wild nature, beyond the scope of humankind to tame, that must be authentically respected, ecouraged, cojoled, and tactfully tended, rather than ever fully 'broken-in.' The idiom of the un-forceable horse brings us back to the valorisation of choice, with the horse featured as the *ultimate* chooser, wildly independent and recalcitrat, therefore, potentially, the ultimate relationship partner, honest and true and authentic (specifically *not* false or forced), *if* one can genuinely win him over (Schuurman and Franklin 2015, Latimer and Birke 2009). These fragmentary ideas about nature, choice and connectivity are sometimes contradictory. On the one hand, relationships with horses can be considered particularly authentic because nature is too fierce to be doctored by human whim and culture; while on the other, there is a risk that nature is misused and misrepresented such that not all working relationships are considered 'real connections' after all. On the one hand, choice is the very substance of real connection, such that humans cultivate the choosing capacity of themselves and their horses when developing ridden relationships, while on the other, humans are considered too able to impose their whim on nature, human choice can ruin or misrecognise the relationship, and natural relationships based on the horse's instincts, bodies and behaviours are considered more real than 'artificial' ones. Throughout these complex dynamics bettern choice and nature, I have demonstrated that riders' projects of grasping towards the real, and of cultivating connectivity are inseparable from one another. Asense of really real is searched for and sometimes found in connectivity, and true connections were formed through searching for the really real.

What can animals offer the anthropology of ethics?

My argument has largely been formed by creatively employing perspectives from the anthropology of ethics in order to critically evaluate how well particular contributions to the 'animal turn' can accommodate my participants' ethical relationships with their horses. However, the anthropology of ethics can also benefit from, not only contribute to, this dialogue with mutlispecies ethnography. Two pathways for engaging the anthropology of ethics with ethnographies of human-animal relationships have already been proposed by other authors, and I believe I can offer a third. The first involves injunctions already discussed in the thesis, to attend to embodied dynamics of 'witnessing', caring for, or responding to one another (Dave 2011, Haraway 2008, Despret 2013). I have found it useful to recognise the ways in which my participants' relationships with their horses are affective, tactile, and developed in relation to the horse's sensitive responses. I have found it informative, for example, to observe that riders' reflective practices have a direct and immediate impact on the horse, and are developed through this responsiveness. However, I have found it particularly interesting and important to attend to the way these registers of knowing are reflected upon (through dialogue, individually, online, with friends, instructors etc) evaluated, and deliberately cultivated. This cultivation has been directed toward both horse and human equestrian partners: so that riders might know horses better, but also so that horses might be better to know. This emphasises the way self-knowledge and other-knowledge are interrelated in contextually specific ways.

In line with this, the second already-proposed route for acknowledging animals within accounts of ethics is to observe the way they might be thought about ethically by humans, as part of human evaluative ethical projects. This is the suggestion offered by James Laidlaw (2013:106-7, 2014:503-4), who maintains his assertion that the ethical domain is characterised by the reflective freedom of ethical subjects – a trait he is yet to be convinced of in non-humans. This does not mean animals are not significant to ethics, he asserts, after all, "Lots of things other than other ethical subjects are of ethical significance to us" (2013:107). However, this treatment does not suffice for Eduardo Kohn, who, in a book review, pushes Laidlaw further to investigate the ethical dynamics 'beyond the human' (2014). Laidlaw responds, "[I]t remains unclear to me whether by this he is suggesting merely (and surely uncontentiously) that beings other than humans ought to receive our ethical consideration, whether they ought to be in some further unspecified

way “involved” in humans' ethical practice, or whether they are themselves ethical subjects, and, if the last of these, whether this is to include all nonhuman life equally (bacteria as much as forests in the same way as dogs)” (2014:503).

I believe animals are involved in a 'further unspecified way' in humans' ethical practice, and that this relates precisely to the question that Laidlaw raises; the *inconclusive* matter of animals' reflexive capabilities. Responsive, aware, trainable, sociable, affective creatures like horses afford particular ethical problems and projects by virtue of the degrees and types of reflexivity, morality, conscience, communication and evaluation that they can be thought to demonstrate (or not). Veena Das (2013) refers to Stephen Mulhall's (2007) reading of Heidegger, “Animals neither simply lack access to objects in their own right (as do stones) nor do they simply possess a humanly accessible mode of access to objects (as do other Dasein); their singularity in our experience lies in their having a mode of access to and dealing with the world from which we are excluded” (Mulhall 2007:76 from Das 2013:17). I am wary of this ontological take on what animals are (and stones and people), as it excludes many ethnographic accounts of multispecies relationships which challenge that categorisation. Nevertheless, I believe there is something – on slightly more general terms – about the responsiveness, but non-verbality of animals, that makes them ethically interesting and worth anthropological attention.

Animals can constitute a particular sort of problem, of great interest to the anthropologist of ethics, precisely because their (limited? Different?) reflexive capacities and moral accountabilities which are not human. In observing how people make sense of the non-human interactant, who is not-quite-ethical, or at least, not considered ethical in the same way as humans (since non-verbal), we can learn more about the constitution of human ethical conduct. We can learn about the varied ethical import and changing understandings of ideas central to human-human ethical relatedness, such as intentionality, choice, emotionality, 'theory of mind', language, truth, communication, trust, bond, co-operation and so on, when these concepts are stretched, morphed, contested, discovered, and performed differently in relationships with non-humans. For example, in this thesis we have learned about the ethics of representation, by observing the way horse owners take responsibility for managing the limited (but not wholly absent or irrelevant) representational capacities of horses.

While many multispecies authors have argued for the ethical import of non-verbal, embodied responsiveness (Haraway 2003, 2008, Rose 2002, 2007, Despret 2004, 2013, 2015, Ingold 2000 2006, 2008) other anthropologists have argued for the centrality of verbal language to ethical aspects of life (Carrithers 2005, Lambek 2010, Kohn 2013:133-135, Keane 2015, Zigon 2014). However, few have investigated the relationship between these two registers of knowing and communicating with others, that is, the ethics of translating non-verbal communication into speakable terms (though see McKearney 2018). Alessandro Duranti has argued that we need to collect ethnographic data that attends to the figuring of 'intentionality' in observable ethical practices (such as giving excuses, teaching children) rather than through direct questioning about what can be known about others' minds (2008, 2015). Interactions with animals provide an ideal opportunity to observe all sorts of aspects of 'marked' (explicit or observable) empathy (Hollan and Throop 2008:394) or emapthy-like experiences, practices, and ideas. This includes people's ideas about what sort of access to the other's experience they expect to have, who might be expected to display empathy (including animals?), in what way, what happens when they don't, and what forms of 'complex' (Hollan 2012:71) empathy are called upon when empathising is difficult? The responsiveness, yet non-verbality of animals, affords instances where human-human ethical conduct does not quite apply, and the way those instances are managed, celebrated, or problematised, are potentially informative about aspects of human-human ethical conduct.

The role of language in ethical life

This interest in the way people interact with beings that are not human, but not considered *entirely* unreflexive, has been supported by my interest in speech. In the introduction I explained that this focus on speech may be seen as a move away from the imperative in the animal turn to attend to embodied registers of knowing that we (to some extent) share with animals. I have found it more informative to attend to the important distinction between those who can, and can't speak. I have investigated speech not only as a matter of speaking *about* animals, but also as a way of interacting *with* them. In Chapters Three, Four and Five, I described instances where riders' recognised the impact words have on the embodied relationship with the horse. Words spoken or heard by riders had effects on their muscle movements, breathing rate, somatic sensitivity and emotional tone. Words changed minds and bodies – even when they were not considered completely 'true'.

However, it is not only the performative but also the referential aspect of speech that I have observed as important in the relationships with horses described here. Through honing referential descriptions about horses in dialogue, riders were able to develop a sense of legitimate knowledge and 'shared reality'. Through adjusting the body towards the feel that instructors describe, riders were able to calibrate their own senses towards the parts of the horse that couldn't quite be felt. Through refering to the horse as an object of joint attention, they were able to reflexively develop their own ethical 'stance' in relation to other humans. In attending to language, my ethnography has therefore asserted the importance of the third party in ethical human-horse relationships, which are always also human-(horse)-human relationships too. We have also seen varieties of self-reflection through the use of speech, particularly in Chapter Four, where different forms of reflexivity (meta-reflexivity, irony, self-censoring) were evidenced.

This is not to suggest that language is the only important medium for ethical conduct, in fact, my intent has been to show how hard riders must work to put non-verbal regiters of ethical relatedness into words. However, I assert that we can learn about those non-verbal registers of relatedness (such as 'feel' , affect, and maternal love) by studying the verbal work that goes into accounting for, and cultivating those experiences and practices. Drawing these threads together, I have shown that language plays a central role in the development of embodied relationships between these riders and their horses, even though they aim for a connection so profoundly close that it is not mediated by any sort of representational communication, and is practically inexpressable in verbal terms.

Resillient story tellers

In drawing to a close, I would like to revist my initial assumptions and anxieties about equestrian rhetoric that I mentioned in the introduction. There, I noted a potential for language manipulation and even hypocrisy that made me uneasy. I hope to have demonstrated that I have, in fact, found British amatuer horse riders to be 'reasonable creatures' throughout the thesis, but a brief comparison secures the point. Throughout, I have critiqued elements of the 'animal turn' for its lack of ability to accommodate the ethical practices of my participants. However, we do well at this point to recognise the covalences too: multispecies ethnographers seem - like horse riders - invested in the idea of epistemological responsibility, that is, in the importance of knowing your

connectedness well. After all, they often appeal to their readers to *think differently* in order to relate better. The difference is in the epistemological virtues that academics of human-animal relatedness display, compared with those of British amateur horse riders. Clearly, both groups are internally varied and conflicted (as this thesis depicts), yet an archetypal comparison can be sketched out. Both groups share a problem with putting relationships with animals into words, within a context where 'objective truth' is a potent, but vulnerable concept. The academics handle this problem through literary sophistication, complexity, and sometimes ambiguity. Vinciane Despret argues, “An achievement in this type of dispositive would actually be to make things less simple, and to stammer in one's reading, as I sometimes do in writing, in laughter or in irritation. In short, to cultivate – as Haraway so accurately does, not without unease or trouble, with anger and humor – contradictory versions that are impossible to harmonize” (2016:176). Despret characterises a common aim within multispecies literature of playing with, and unsettling, the reader's presumptions about animality, humanity, knowledge and more (Ogden, Hall and Tanita 2013).

My participants used similar techniques, rhetorical tactics, irony, and inconsistency in order to put felt relationships into words. However, compared to the mutlispecies literature authors, my participants were also particularly brave in the way in which they made regular propositional claims about the true nature of their horse, or their horse’s thoughts, character and intentions – and equally bold in the way in which they rigorously evaluated one another's claims for veracity. These stories are the means through which equestrians make their horses more knowable, and in doing so, offer themselves up for evaluation by the self and others. This boldness is also a product of the nature of equestrian engagement with the responsive horse; there is a demand for immediacy, conviction, courage and authenticity and little tolerance during equestrian interactions for 'overthinking' or reservation. I contend that horse riders might be considered particularly resilient in their effort to keep narrating the horse as a way of ethically relating to it, especially amid such active and moralised critique. I have learned that British horse riders don't tell stories about the horse’s mind because they have trivialised the problem of knowing the horse, but as one moment in an agile project of working out the 'best good' description. These stories are not self-serving, but self-cultivating. The potential for other perspectives, other tellings, is at the heart of why the stories need telling, because the ethical cultivation of self depends upon ascertaining and negotiating with the perspectives

of others. This includes human others who act as co-authors, authorities, apprentices and audiences with whom to build moments of shared reality. But I have also shown that human selfhood, in this context, is contingent upon the equine others, who are considered never quite knowable enough.

Appendix

Christine's Poem for Jolly:

To My Beautiful Boy from his human mother

High in the clouds of heaven today
A little horse angel waits:
With the other angels he will not play
But stands all alone at the gates.
“For I know my mother will come” says he,
“And when she comes she will call for me.”

The other angels hurry by,
To faraway fields and are gone,
And he watches them with a wistful eye
As he stands at the gate all alone.
“But I know if I just wait patiently
Someday my mother will call for me”

And his mother, down on earth below,
As she wanders across his yard,
Remembers him and whispers low,
How losing him was so hard.
And the little horse angel pricks his ears
And dreams that his mother’s voice he hears

And when at last his mother waits
Alone in the dark and cold
For her dying breath to open the gates
That lead to the clouds of gold,
She will hear him call to guide her on,
Her beautiful boy who had never gone

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