Interspecies Interactions
Animals and Humans between the Middle Ages and Modernity

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3 Equine empathies
Giving voice to horses in early modern Germany

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Empathy, animal autobiography, and anthropomorphism

Any survey of early modern imagery reveals a colourful parade of horses in virtually all media. Albrecht Dürer’s well-known engraving Knight, Death and the Devil (1513) provides a typical example of just such imagery (Figure 3.1). Most early modern images, like Dürer’s print, depict the horse as imposingly powerful but utterly obedient to the rider’s will; horse and human exist together in a state of perfect harmony, without any hint of conflict or discord. In the engraving, the horse trots energetically but calmly forward while the rider easily, even casually, directs the movement with only one hand holding the double reins. Following philosophical and artistic traditions stretching back to classical antiquity, early modern representation of the horse’s obedient submission is understood both to communicate and to prove the genuine authority of his rider. The horse functions as a cultural symbol for virtuous human mastery over a number of dangerously capricious phenomena, including emotions, political states, and nature itself.

While strategies of visual representation at play in images like Dürer’s print encode a host of social, political and cultural ideologies, they also render the horse as a living, sentient, particular being practically invisible. Animal studies challenges historians of every discipline to search beyond representation in order to get as close as possible to the lives, experiences and even agency of animals. While this enterprise is fraught with difficulties ranging from the epistemological to the methodological, intellectual and ethical imperatives compel us to think about history and culture in ways that are sensitive to the interconnectedness between – some would even say the consubstantiality of – humans and animals, both in the past and in the present.

Viewing early modern equestrian imagery through an animal studies lens changes the kinds of questions we ask of the works. It is no longer enough to ascertain what gait or movement the horse is performing in the image, what virtue/vice the animal symbolizes, or even what ideologies and practices inform the horse’s representation. Now the questions include: what was it like for horses to interact with their riders? What did they experience in being trained to perform movements they are represented in visual imagery as executing? What were the possibilities for equine agency in a horse’s interaction with a human?

My research on early modern German hippology has yielded three sources that provide some answers to these questions. In this essay, I use these texts as suggestive sources that provide an insight into horses’ lives in the early
modern period. Written in the mid-sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, these three texts attempt to provide a horse’s point of view of human-animal interaction by giving them voices with which to speak. Written of course by humans, the texts nonetheless endeavour to articulate what horses may have experienced and how they may have responded. At the bases of these texts lie observations about contemporaneous horse-human interactions that reveal close attention to the equine side of the equation.

I have designated these texts as empathetic, rather than sympathetic, because of the deeper level of engagement involved in empathy. To feel sympathy with fellow creatures is to be concerned about them and to feel sorry for their misfortune; to experience empathy moves beyond merely noting another’s problem with concern to actually sharing the other’s feelings, to experiencing those feelings yourself. In order to write about a horse’s feelings — to give words to an animal’s experiences — the three German authors had to share what they perceived to be those feelings and experiences, and thus their writing was a deeply empathetic act. Furthermore, as we will see, the goal of their texts is not simply to draw readers’ attention to the suffering experienced by horses at the hands of humans, but to awaken the readers’ empathy and create compassion in order to effect change.

Historical, neurological factors and historically specific cultural practices support my argument that contemporaneous readers responded empathetically to the three German texts. The art historian David Freedberg has drawn on neurological research in order to understand viewers’ somatic and emotional responses to visual imagery. He cites scientific studies that show how the same responses are triggered in the nervous system of the viewer of an image as would have been triggered in a person who was actually engaged in the movement/experience depicted in an image. Other studies he references link a viewer’s emotional/empathetic response to the emotional response of another person observed by the viewer. Thus there is a neurological basis for the experience of empathy based on visual perception. We are, it seems, hard-wired for empathy and have been for millennia. Although the sources interrogated here are not visual images but rather texts, their insistent and detailed descriptions enable and encourage a reader to vividly picture in her/his imagination the texts’ accounts. These compelling mental images of another’s suffering would provide the basis for the readers’ empathetic response.

Not only would the activation of specific neurons and parts of the brain account for such a response, I speculate that early modern cultural practices also shaped the reception of these texts. Their authors, Hans Sachs, Christoph Lieb, and Gabriel von Danup, include uncomfortably graphic descriptions of horses’ maltreatment by humans. In these descriptions, the horses sweat and bleed profusely, they are whipped and spurred, they are shouted at and cursed, their bodies are contorted and broken by bearing heavy loads, and they die miserable deaths. Early modern readers would have been familiar with a similar catalogue of abuse and suffering. In order to facilitate and stimulate personal piety, sermons and devotional treatises often focused on the Passion of Jesus, describing in lurid detail Jesus’ physical and emotional torment. Bodily fluids such as sweat, blood, and spittle feature prominently in these accounts. They relate how Jesus was whipped and his skin pierced by the crown of thorns, how his tormenters shouted and cursed at him, how his body was broken down further under the weight of the cross he was forced to drag to Golgotha, and how he died a miserable death nailed to the cross. All of these descriptions are accompanied by exhortations that the listeners/readers should immerse themselves deeply in these narrated events to the point that they are able to experience what Jesus did, to feel the same emotional anguish and physical suffering. The goal of this empathetic response was to effect change: for the believer to understand that her/his sins were the ultimate source of Jesus’ sacrificial death — and its torturous preamble — and thus to repent.

As Susan Karant-Nunn has argued, this treatment of the Passion narrative is more characteristic of Christianity prior to the Reformation. She demonstrates that Martin Luther (1483–1546) rejected the rhetorical and contemplative strategy of providing grisly accounts of the Passion intended to bring their listeners/readers to emotional and physical outbursts such as weeping and wailing. Karant-Nunn argues that Luther emphasized the emotions of consolation and love as appropriate responses for a believer’s contemplation of the Passion: ‘Luther did not want the laity to figuratively flagellate themselves and to weep. Having mastered the story, they were to move quickly beyond it to God’s love for them, and Christ’s obedience in fulfilling the ordained atonement. On this they were to rest their thought and their feelings. Nonetheless, Karant-Nunn also notes that how subsequent Lutheran and reformed theologians treated the Passion in their texts and sermons varied considerably and that some continued to dwell on painful details in order to encourage the believer to seek atonement.

The texts by Sachs, Lieb, and von Danup were all produced well after the process of reformation had begun in the German territories, but Karant-Nunn’s qualifications suggest that even readers who came from Lutheran or other reformed traditions may still have been familiar with engaging empathetically with a viscerally evocative narrative, like the Passion, and would have brought that familiar practice of engagement to the texts on horses.

This entire process of empathetic response on the parts of the authors Sachs, Lieb, and von Danup and of their readers, as well as the ideally ensuing changes of attitude and behaviour, must have been rooted in the observable behaviour of horses. They communicate their experiences through their bodies so vividly that the authors feel enabled and compelled literally to give the horses voices with which to speak. Thus we may think about horses exercising a kind of agency, albeit in cooperation with humans, to effect potential change.

Giving voice to horses situates the texts by Sachs, Lieb, and von Danup within a literary genre that we would call today ‘animal autobiography.’ All three German texts are autobiographical because in each the horses appear to
relate their own life experiences. For Anglophones, the most famous example of ‘animal autobiography’ may be Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877), but this is actually a venerable genre rooted in classical antiquity. For example, in an epigram attributed to the Greek poet Aulus Lucinius Archias (fl. 120–60 BCE), a horse laments that despite the many brilliant victories he claimed in his youth at the Panhellenic games, now as an old horse he provides power for a grindstone by walking around in endless circles, goaded into ceaseless motion by frequent lashings of the whip.

Writers of ‘animal autobiography’ provide easy targets for various critiques that range from sentimentality and triviality, to outright ventriloquism and anthropomorphism. But a number of scholars defend the genre. Like images, and like any other kinds of texts, these ‘autobiographies’ must also be understood as representations. As Karla Armbruster notes, refusing the possibility that humans could ever speak for animals based on ‘the acceptance of such a radical gap between species simply perpetuates anthropocentric assumptions about human uniqueness and superiority’. For Ryan Hediger, the main issue involved in writing and reading ‘animal autobiography’ is not whether or not human language can accurately reveal an animal’s mind. He advocates thinking about language as a tool rather than as a vehicle for epistemological certainties. Hediger labels this kind of language as ‘rhetorical’, and he claims that it allows animal autobiographies to function in a potentially useful way for humans and animals in the real world. For Hediger, the main issues are:

How can texts representing nonhuman animals be useful to us and to animals? How can they help us, however imperfectly, to understand other lives? So, rather than foreswearing the attempt to think through nonhuman lives, often in fear of the dreaded specter of ‘anthropomorphism’, a rhetorical approach allows that all language use is finally situated, pragmatic, not universal.

Language does not offer a perfect system granting us unimpeded access to an animal’s experiences. In addition, it is difficult to imagine that our understanding of animals could ever completely transcend the bounds of anthropomorphism. But just because we cannot get it completely right does not mean that our attempts to think about and discuss the lives of animals have no value whatsoever. In fact, Erica Fudge points to a potentially ethical dimension of anthropomorphism evident in texts like ‘animal autobiographies’:

We may regard the humanization of animals that takes place in many narratives as sentimental, but without it the only relation we can have with animals is a very distant, and perhaps mechanistic one. As well as this, anthropomorphism might actually serve an ethical function [...]. By gaining access to the world of animals, these books offer a way of thinking about human-animal relations more generally, and potentially more positively.

In turning now to the texts by Sachs, Lieb, and von Danup, I take my cue from Hediger and Fudge in looking beyond the obvious charge of anthropomorphism that could be lodged against all three. Instead, I will think of these texts as pragmatic and ‘useful [...] to animals’ (Hediger), and as ethical narratives intended to encourage early modern readers to think ‘about human-animal relations [...] potentially more positively’ (Fudge). My point of departure shall be that the intended function of these three texts – at least in part – was to improve the lives of horses. In order to fulfill that function, the authors describe some of the practices and conditions to which horses were subjected. In so doing, they offer the historian vital information about early modern horse-human interactions that moves well beyond all the pretty pictures of the masterly rider on his happily obedient mount.

**Hans Sachs (c.1557), Christoph Lieb (1616) and Gabriel von Danup (1623)**

European texts on horsemanship, including those written in German, universally include passages that eloquently praise horses for their beauty, nobility and utility. For example, in the introduction to a book on the treatment of equine ailments printed in 1583 in Strasbourg, the horse is lauded for his special role in the display of noble identity: ‘With his exceptionally beautiful form and figure, his brave, aristocratic disposition, and his proud, erect body, the horse is particularly well-suited to highlight the honour and preeminence of the nobility.’ Certainly passages such as these were helpful in justifying the production and encouraging the consumption of such books, but they also must have spoken to an appreciation for horses and the fundamental roles they played in many people’s lives. Nonetheless, admiration and appreciation constitute only a small portion of attitudes about horses in early modern Germany.

Hans Sachs (1494–1576), the famous shoe-maker, *Meistersinger* and prolific poet from Nuremberg, reveals another subset of attitudes and their attendant practices in a prose-poem written and published c.1557. According to these attitudes, the horse was simply an object to be used for a variety of human needs. These uses did not in any way oblige humans to be concerned with or attend to the animal’s wellbeing. Consequently, the life of a horse as described in Sachs’ text was miserable from start to finish. Sachs wrote on a strikingly wide variety of topics, including texts favourable to Martin Luther and the process of reformation that his native Nuremberg had officially embraced by 1525. Animals appear as characters in many of the approximately 1,700 prose-poems that he composed over his lifetime. However, only the poem Sachs wrote in c.1557 features a horse who tells his entire life-story from his own perspective.

Sachs’ poem, entitled *The Miserable, Lamenting Horse-Hide* (Ger. *Das elend klagend Rosshaut*), opens on a Monday morning. A badly hungover cobbler enters his workshop and gets out a piece of horse-hide leather with the intent
to make shoes. But when he begins to cut the leather with his shears the horse-hide exclaims: 'Oh! Stop cutting into me! How much more misery must I endure?' The greatly astonished cobbler asks the horse-hide who he is, and the piece of leather responds: 'I am the old skin of a horse and I suffered much during my life.' Thereupon follows the hide's lengthy and detailed narrative of his utterly lamentable life.

The horse is born on a farm but essentially neglected. He is bought by a profit-hungry horse-trader and sold to an impoverished nobleman who supports himself by highway robbery. This is a very strenuous life and because the nobleman is poor, he does not give the horse much to eat. When this noble highwayman is arrested, the horse is sold to a wealthy burglar who feeds him well enough but rides him hard and rides him badly. During one of the many tournaments in which the pretentious burglar participates, the horse is injured and becomes lame. As a result, he is sold to a wagoner who hitchs the horse to stupendously heavy loads that the animal must haul up and down mountains, through snow, rain, and mud and in great heat and cold. The wagoner regularly beats him and gives him poor fodder. After ten years of such toil, the horse is so broken down that he can no longer pull large wagons so he is sold to pull small carts. He is so feeble by this point, however, that it is not long before, as a wretched bag of skin and bones, with hanging head and drooping ears, he is brought to the skinner and slaughtered. Even as a carcass the horse suffers, being gnawed upon by the skinner's dog.

Moved by the empathy he experiences by listening to the horse-hide's story, and by the hide's plea to spare him, the poem's cobbler changes his course of action. He explains to the hide that he is obligated to make shoes, and that the hide is the only piece of leather he has in his workshop. Nonetheless, the cobbler fulfills the hide's wish: instead of using the horse's skin to make farmers' boots to be worn outside in filth and slop, the cobbler makes dainty slippers to be worn inside by ladies. While it is true that the cobbler's change of course in the poem does not do much for the way living horses are treated by humans, he shows the hide what mercy he can. It is up to the reader, who has followed the story and who presumably will not be dealing with talking horse-hides but with the animals themselves, to perform what mercies s/he can.

The horrendous treatment of the horse meted out by the men he encounters certainly serves to highlight human thoughtlessness and selfish cruelty. The over-arching theme of Sachs' prodigious oeuvre is the critique of human behaviour with the intent of inspiring moral improvement. Sachs' texts are clearly didactic in nature. They deal with quotidian subject matter and use easily understood, even colloquial, language in order to prove their points. The readers of Sachs' The Miserable, Lamenting Horse-Hide would most likely have come from a broad spectrum of literate and semi-literate urban dwellers, both in Nuremberg and beyond. Thus the potential audience of the text was both large and varied. The apparent goal of Sachs' text is to encourage this audience to recognize some human behaviour as cruel and wrong and to empathize with the horse. For that to happen, Sachs' narrative of what the horse has experienced must have been recognisably familiar to the audience. Thus, despite the poem's additional functions such as praising the cobbler's craft (a description of which takes up just over half of the poem) and critiquing human failings, the text in fact can tell us something about what life was presumably like for some horses. The text both springs from and strives to incite an empathetic response that will result in an awareness of the plight of these animals and a change of behaviour.

At this point, we should ask how the cobbler and poet Sachs would have been familiar with horses' experiences and what could have informed his empathetic response to them. Answers to these questions remain speculative. As a cobbler, Sachs would perhaps have had dealings with the local skinner/knacker (Schindler/Abdecker). Because their meat was generally not for human consumption, horses at the end of their lives were not given to a butcher (Metzger) for slaughter, but instead, as in Sachs' poem, handed over to the skinner or knacker, who would skin the carcass and either return the hide to the owner for a fee or retain it to sell on to merchants or to craftsmen who worked with leather, such as tanners and saddlers, and also perhaps to cobblers. In Sachs' poem, the horse-hide is sold by the skinner to a merchant, who in turn sells it to a tanner, who sells it to the poet's cobbler. Perhaps the involvement of several different middlemen described by Sachs for the procurement of the hide was typical for production in a large city like Nuremberg, as opposed to smaller towns and villages, where such middlemen would presumably not be needed. But their intervening presence also serves to intimate a desired if not actual distance between the cobbler – the representative of Sachs' own honourable craft – and the skinner, often a poor, uneducated man whose duties also included other useful but unsavoury activities such as slaying stray dogs, cleaning out latrines, and assisting the executioner.

Sachs certainly would have seen horses in the streets of Nuremberg pulling carts and wagons and being ridden by other people; presumably at some time he himself would have travelled somewhere on horseback. The same was probably true for the many readers of Sachs' text as well. That horses even occasionally wandered loose in the streets is indicated by the existence of a civil servant (the Löff) in Nuremberg whose job it was to round up stray horses and pigs and to return them to their owners once a fine had been paid. That Sachs may himself have owned horses is suggested by the fact that his personal library included a book on how to cure equine ailments. In these ways, Sachs would have gained familiarity with a variety of horse-human interactions.

The heartlessly instrumentalist attitudes towards horses that Sachs ecorates in his poem may have been part of a general attitude about animals indirectly informed by the writings and ideas of Thomas Aquinas (c.1225-1274) that dominated the later Middle Ages and continued to enjoy authority in the early modern period. Aquinas' standpoint may be summed up by the following quotation: 'for by divine providence, they [animals] are intended for man's use according to the order of nature. Hence it is not wrong for man to make use of them, either by killing or in any other way whatsoever.'
Aquinas does concede that humans should avoid treating animals cruelly. But the issue for Aquinas is not the suffering the individual animal would experience under those conditions but that cruelty to animals leads to cruelty to other humans. Sachs' poem parts company with Thomist attitudes since nowhere in the horse-hide's lamentable list of the abominations he experiences is any concern voiced that such despicable behaviour would transfer over into inter-human relations. It is unclear why Sachs appears to reject a constellation of attitudes that held sway for centuries. It is tempting to surmise that Martin Luther's views may have informed Sachs' standpoint because Sachs publicly responded so positively to Luther and his ideas. But work has yet to be done on Luther's perspective on animals. Preliminary research suggests the reformer's basically instrumentalized view of nature while also pointing to possibilities for his more open and direct engagement with animals.30

Evidently, Sachs knew what he was talking about because the maltreatment of horses described in his poem is also described in a horsemanship manual written by Christoph Jakob Lieb. What we know about Lieb is only what we can glean from the book's introductory text in which Lieb identifies himself as having served as a *Bereutter* for the Lutheran Electoral Prince of Saxony, Christian II (1583–1611) at his court in Dresden.31 *Bereutter* were men employed to exercise and train the horses belonging to and stabled at the court.32 The horse in Sachs' poem reports that his first owner, the noble highwayman, regularly 'hammered [my sides] with his sharp spurs and beat me hard around the ears.' In his manual *The Practice and Art of Riding* (Orig. Practica et Arte di Cavalleria. Übung und Kunst des Reitens), published in 1616, Lieb criticizes just such practices, among others:

Punishment of a horse who will not go forward may be given in a number of ways, depending on the individual animal [...]. But I do not like the punishments that some people use, such as jabbing the horse with spikes, or burning him with fire, or wrapping a rope around his genitals and then yanking on it when he attempts to disobey by standing still. [...] Others are accustomed to punishing the horse by beating him with whips or clubs between his ears and on his head; I do not like this either because two plates of the horse's skull join together at this place and by striking the horse here one can easily break the skull apart and if that happens the horse will die.34

Lieb's manual and Sachs' poem also intersect on the topic of bits. Sachs' horse describes how his second owner, the pretentious burgher, 'tortured me first with one kind of bit, and then with another, until I didn't know what to do, whereupon he beat and whipped me harshly.'35 The illustrated title-page to Lieb's riding manual takes up a similar point, and this title-page serves as my second example of an empathetic, 'animal autobiographical' text. On this page, in addition to the full title of the manual, we find a brief poem that is written as if by the horse himself (Figure 3.2).
In this poem, the horse refers to the many inept riders to whom he is subjected. Although they are the ones making the mistakes and riding poorly, they blame the horse. To fix the problems they themselves cause, the riders experiment with all kinds of different bits in the horse's mouth. Lieb's horse laments that even though he is very willing and tries to accommodate these riders, what saddens him most is that his only reward from them is their ungratefulness. In the manual, Lieb discusses horses that are 'hard in the mouth' (hartneulig). He argues passionately against using harsh bits to solve a problem that often has nothing to do with the horse's mouth but actually has its origins elsewhere, such as in feet that are sore or backs that are weak. He admonishes his readers:

Just remember that the horse is made of flesh and blood [...]. If you attack and molest a horse with harsh bits, if you rip open and wound his mouth, which is what these kinds of bits do, not only are you not going to solve the problem, you are going to ruin the horse.36

As the above quotation intimates, Lieb writes his manual as a horse-trainer for other horse-trainers. He specifies this readership in the first part of his lengthy and descriptive title: The Practice and Art of Riding in which the Horse-trainer [...] Should be Experienced and Practiced [...] (Ger. Übung und kunst des Reitens/ in welcher der Bereuter / [...] erfahren und geübt sein sol [...]). The last thing a horse-trainer would want to do is to ruin an expensive animal owned by a noble client, and Lieb's text explains how to avoid professional disaster. His text, which presents horses as fellow creatures made of flesh and blood and who possess human emotions like sadness is surely meant to influence the attitudes and actions of trainers by encouraging them to abandon or eschew cruel and violent practices and to work with their charges in a manner appropriate to an individual horse's physical and emotional constitution.

Further along in Lieb's interminable title he specifies a further kind of readership for his text. The title states that Lieb has written his book to the especial honour and for the pleasure of all those who love and are partial to this noble and knighthly art [of riding] (Ger. Allen Liebhabern / und dieser Adelichen Ritterlichen Kunst zugeatham / zu sonderbahren Ehren und gefallen). Here we are probably dealing with an audience not of horse-trainers but the men who employ them, members of the higher nobility such as Christian II's successor Johann Georg (1585–1656), to whom Lieb's book is formally dedicated. The book could be used by these noble employers as a reference to ascertain whether or not their horse-trainers are following correct procedures and implementing appropriate practices. The book certainly serves to signal Lieb's own knowledge as well as his attitudes about horses—attitudes that emphatically embrace the empathetic. He may well have been interested in communicating these things to Johann Georg, the brother of Lieb's former employer, Christian II, who had died five years prior to the book's publication. Lieb may have intended the text to draw Johann Georg's attention to his dead brother's faithful servant and skilled horseman in the hope of finding subsequent employment at the Dresden court. In light of this possibility, we can speculate that Lieb's empathy with the horses he trains, made so evident in his book and even strikingly advertised on its title-page, may have been regarded by him as an attribute that would aid him in acquiring noble patronage. This is not to imply that Lieb's empathy was necessarily disingenuous, but to suggest that empathy was valued as a professional qualification in certain circles, including at the Saxon court in Dresden.

The third 'animal autobiography' was also written by a former court horse-trainer. In his horsemanship tract published in 1624, Gabriel von Danup tells the reader that he has recently retired from his post at the Electoral Prince of Brandenburg's court and that although he is 51 years old, he can easily ride and train five or more horses a day.37 This information seems to indicate that he is currently seeking employment. But it is his remarkable pamphlet, published a year earlier (in 1623), the lengthy title of which is most aptly abridged to The Horses' Supplication, that contains an arresting and powerful example of equine empathy.38 The pamphlet describes a fantastic dialogue between Wilhelm Ludwing, Count of Nassau, renowned in his day as a consummate horseman, and the Italian riding master Pirr'Antonio Ferraro of Naples.39 At the time the pamphlet was published, both men were already deceased. Their dialogue, which is actually a pointed debate, takes place on Mount Parnassus before the god Apollo. The ostensible reason for the debate is that Count Wilhelm has been asked by horses to bring to Apollo their petition for protection against tyrannical riders. Accordingly, Apollo has granted Wilhelm an audience during which the count reads the petition aloud.

The horses' petition is heart-breaking.40 In the text, they describe how their riders train them. The description features many of the practices we have already encountered and adds several more. The horses' talk moves from being whipped and beaten about the head and between the ears, to riders using their spurs against the horses' sides as hard as they possibly can, to being stabbed from the ground by unmounted men with iron spikes and to having their mouths ripped open and bloodied. In addition, the horses describe harsh use of the cavesson-rein, jerked with such force and frequency across the thin skin of their noses that the cartilage is laid bare; the practice of tying their heads down to their chests or to one side or another and leaving them thus constrained and contorted for hours on end; and being constantly shouted at and cursed.

As a trainer of horses, von Danup, like Lieb, was certainly an eyewitness to such brutal practices. Von Danup's desire and ability to describe those practices from the perspective of the horse strongly suggests that he experienced a deep empathy with the animals that he hoped to awaken also in his readers. He certainly wanted to effect change and improve the horses' lives. The horses' supplication to Apollo concludes with their plea that the god should command riders to stop tormenting them with their ignorantly barbaric methods and instead to train them according to true skill and science
The pamphlet is not dedicated to anyone and there are no introductory remarks. However, the intensely detailed discussion of riding techniques, the identity of the clear protagonist as the Count of Nassau, and the concept of having this debate take place on Mount Parnassus indicates that the intended readership must have included horsemen from elite circles. This was the audience von Danup hoped to impress, perhaps to gain patronage and support or simply to enhance his reputation. Von Danup’s passionate empathy seems to spring from profound knowledge, superior skill, and a keen sense of mercy. As in Lieb’s case, these qualities may well have been genuine while they also may have enhanced von Danup’s professional prospects.

The virtue of empathy also allows von Danup to criticize the Italians, hailed by many contemporaries as preeminent in the art of riding. In sharp distinction to von Danup’s protagonist, Count Wilhelm, the Neapolitan riding master Pirr’Antonio rejects the horses’ supplication as completely baseless. According to Pirr’Antonio, horses are essentially uncooperative creatures who, with their innate wrathfulness (Zorn) and stubbornness (Halsstarrigkeit), resist the riders’ virtuous efforts to train them; thus the riders are compelled to punish the animals’ obstinacy. During the course of their debate, Pirr’Antonio’s methods and those of the entire school of Italian riding that he represents are unmasked as deeply flawed. Von Danup wishes to persuade his readers that the Italians ride poorly. He describes how they focus mainly on forcing the horse’s head down and driving the animal’s weight onto his forehand. This is not how horses are naturally meant to move. Weighting the forehand means that the horse is out of balance and the weaker parts of his body are forced to do the work and carry the weight, which means that the horse is uncomfortable and will also eventually break down. But because they do not know any better, and because they have no empathy with the horses, the Italians persist in their malpractices and force the animals into submission by whipping, spurring, and beating them. The correct way to ride, von Danup maintains, is to do the exact opposite. The horse must be encouraged to carry his weight on his hindquarters where he is most strong. In this way, the horse is able to balance himself and move freely and elegantly, just as nature intended. Because the Italians lack knowledge, skill, and empathy, they work their horses in a way that goes against the animals’ physical and emotional natures. As a result, their horses are resistant and obstreperous. Empathy thus functions as the fulcrum of an argument intended to discredit the rival Italian school of riding and to elevate northern methods. By knowledgeably criticizing the purported masters of riding and pointing out the error of their ways, von Danup could clearly demonstrate the depth of his own professional skill and experience. As a German horseman, his acute analysis of Italian practices also signals a legitimate transalpine contribution to the pan-European world of horsemanship.

At the end

Sachs, Lieb, and von Danup appear to respond empathetically to their observed behaviour of horses by writing texts that ideally ‘would be useful [...] to animals’ (Hediger) by encouraging early modern readers to think ‘about human-animal relations [...] potentially more positively,’ (Fudge) that is, from the horse’s perspective. Recognizing that it was presumably real horses that set this process in motion is also to recognize that they exercised a degree of agency. This is not to say that empathy was the authors’ sole motivation: moral critique (Sachs), self-advancement (Lieb), even regional chauvinism (von Danup) had their roles to play. Nonetheless, the efforts of these authors to construct and explore an equine viewpoint provide striking evidence of an emotion that the authors may well have genuinely experienced.

According to these texts, horse-human interactions in the early modern period included horrible cruelty. Horses’ genitals were rubbed raw with ropes, their heads were beaten in with clubs, and their mouths were ripped open by metal spikes. Sachs’ horse says that he experienced suffering, misery and torture and even describes himself as a martyr. In the horses’ supplication written by von Danup, the horses beg repeatedly for mercy at the hands of their riders and for protection against the senseless violence perpetrated upon them. They describe their lives as a tragedy of toil, and like Sachs’ horse, as martyrdom. To return to the questions posed at the beginning of this chapter, these experiences of the horse and his interaction with the humans who trained him as described in the texts are rendered completely invisible by early modern equestrian imagery that instead presents a thoroughly anthropocentric fantasy of effortless human control over willingly subservient nature.

There is also no place in this fantasy for the way in which these horses lived or the way in which they died. The end of a horse’s life was often lamentable. Both Sachs’ and von Danup’s horses speak about what happens once they have been injured and lamed by their abusive riders. The horses are sold to carters and wagoners to be used primarily for hauling until they are unable to work. At this stage, they are handed over to the knacker who kills and skins them. The final resting place of these once-magnificent creatures is either a shallow grave in the earth or on a rotting pile of carrion in the knacker’s yard.

Archaeological investigations of a yard in Emmenbrücke (in the Swiss Canton of Zürich) revealed skeletons of over 700 animals, 379 of which were horses. The yard was in use from 1562 to 1866 and the individual skeletons have not been dated. Nonetheless, the zoo-archaeological findings are suggestive. The largest number of dead horses were between the ages of 5-12 years (189, compared to 29 horses under the age of 4 and 23 over the age of 20). The archaeologists examined 100 bone-samples from the equine skeletons. Seventy-three out of 100 were characterised by pathological changes in the spinal column, hock and toe joints, stemming either from degenerative joint
we were executed, evidently not an unusual combination of activities within one locale. Thus it must have been a site of special horror and suffering for both horses and humans. These archaeological investigations strongly suggest that the animal autobiographies considered in this essay are more than mere works of fiction. Instead, they appear to be firmly grounded in the brutal realities manifest in zoo-archaeological evidence.

Notes
1 See Pia F. Cuneo, 'The Artist, His Horse, a Print, and its Audience: Producing and Viewing the Ideal in Dürer's Knight, Death, and the Devil (1513)', in Larry Silver and Jeffrey Chipp Smith (eds), The Essential Düer (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 115–29.
2 One rare exception to early modern representations of the horse as controlled and obedient are the works of the German painter and printmaker Hans Baldung Grien (c.1484–1545). See Pia F. Cuneo, 'Horses as Love–Objects: Shaping Social and Moral Identities in Hans Baldung Grien's Bewitched Groom (ca. 1544) and in Sixteenth-Century Hipposiagny', in id. (ed.), Animals and Early Modern Identity (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 151–68.
4 Critical engagements with the work of Emmanuel Levinas have recently interrogated the relationships among animal ethics, philosophy and literature. See Matthew Calarco, Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 55–77.
7 David Freedberg, 'Empathy, Motion and Emotion', in Klaus Herding and Antje Krause Wahl (eds), Wie sich Gefühle Ausdruck verschaffen: Emotionen in Nahahit (Berlin: Driesen, 2007), 41.
8 According to the work of primatologist Frans de Waal, this is another thing we share with animals. Frans de Waal, The Age of Empathy (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2009).
10 Karant–Nunn, Reformation of Feeling, 63–99.
11 Karant–Nunn, Reformation of Feeling, 97.

12 There are many valuable and critical analyses of Sewell’s work. For an excellent discussion of the book’s eighteenth- and nineteenth-century contexts, see Diana Donald, Picturing Animals in Britain 1750–1830 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 198–252.
17 Ein Neue und bewerte Rossartzney (Strasbourg, 1583), sig. Aii‘v’v. All translations from the German are my own.
19 In many of Sachs’ works, the animal characters speak but the texts in which these characters are given voice are fables. See Winfried Theiß, Exemplarische Allegorik. Untersuchungen zu einem literarischen Phänomen bei Hans Sachs (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1968), 122–36.
21 The opening exchange between hide and cobbler is in Sachs, Rosshaut, sig. Aii‘. The horse-hide’s life story as a horse (versus what it experiences after it has been stripped from the dead horse’s carcass) extends from sigs. Aii‘ to Aiii‘.
22 Sachs, Rosshaut, sig. Bii‘.
26 Walter Bauernfeind, ‘‘Löw’’ in Michael Diefenbacher and Rudolf Endres (eds), Stadtlexikon Nürnberg (Nuremberg: W. Tümmers Verlag, 2000), 640. A number of secondary sources deal with animals in Nuremberg, but none of them mention
horses and deal instead primarily with dogs and pigs. See, for example, Corine Schleif, 'Who are the Animals in the Geese Book?' in Pia Cuneo (ed.), Animals and Early Modern Identity (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 209–42.

27 The book in question bore the title *Kunst puech von rossen, verben und kraneckheit*.

28 See Wolfgang Milde, 'Das Büchnerverzeichnis von Hans Sachs', in Merzbacher (ed.), 300 Jahre Hans Sachs, 47.


34 Lieb, Lieb, Praxis et Arte di Cavalleria, 52.


36 Lieb, Praxis et Arte di Cavalleria, 42–43. See also Lieb's book on bitting: Gebissbuch (Dresden, 1616).


39 Contrary to Van der Horst (ed.), Great Books, 264, von Danup's dialogue does not feature William Prince of Orange (1533–1584). The pamphlet clearly identifies the protagonist as 'Graff Wilhelm von Nassau' and he is never referred to as the Prince of Orange. I believe we are dealing with Count Wilhelm Ludwig of Nassau-Dillingen (1560–1620), the Prince of Orange's nephew (son of Prince William's brother Johann VI) as well as his son-in-law (he married his uncle's daughter Anna). The date of his death (1620) is closer to the date of the pamphlet's publication (1623), and the mediator in von Danup's dialogue is 'Pater de Ney' who is Johann Neyen, the Franciscan monk actively involved in Netherlandish politics in the opening decade of the seventeenth century, thus during Court William's lifetime and well after the death of Prince William. Von Danup's Idea (1624) is dedicated to Prince William's son, Maurice Moritz (1567–1625), captain general of the United Netherlands and Prince of Orange from 1618 to 1625. Maurice and Court William were both cousins and brothers-in-law. Both Count William and Prince Moritz were highly skilled and successful military men. 'Pirr Antonio di Ferrara' refers to the author of Cavolo Frenato, published in Naples in 1602. See Van der Horst (ed.), Great Books, 418–21; and Giovanni Battista Tomassini, *The Italian Tradition of Equestrian Art: A Survey of the Treasures on Horsemanship from the Renaissance and the Centuries Following* (Franktown: Xenophon Press, 2014), 161–74.

40 [Von Danup], Ein sonderliches Neues und Leseverwendiges Geschre, 2–5.


42 [Von Danup], Ein sonderliches Neues und Leseverwendiges Geschre, 7.

43 Evidently this was the same in England. See Peter Edwards, *Horse and Man in Early Modern England* (London: Continuum, 2007), 32–3.


45 Hani, Lang and Ueltschi, 'Ehemalige Richtstätte', 25.

46 Hani, Lang and Ueltschi, 'Ehemalige Richtstätte', 35.

47 Hani, Lang and Ueltschi, 'Ehemalige Richtstätte', 36.


Bibliography


Part II

Use and abuse