WAYS OF KNOWING
Ten Interdisciplinary Essays

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BRILL ACADEMIC PUBLISHERS, INC.
BOSTON • LEIDEN
2004
CHAPTER ONE

MAD MARES AND WILFUL WOMEN: WAYS OF KNOWING NATURE—AND GENDER—in EARLY MODERN HIPPOLOGICAL TEXTS

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The very human tendency to project anthropomorphized identity onto any moving target, and the resulting ontological follies that may follow, find expression in the adage: “God made man in his own image, and then man returned the compliment.” A similar dynamic appears to characterize the relationship between humankind and nature in the early modern period. When we examine various early modern texts dealing with aspects of the natural world, the men who wrote these texts appear to have fashioned nature in their own image. In other words, early modern ways of knowing nature related to and identified with human nature and human concerns.¹ This observation coincides with Michel Foucault’s definition of the Renaissance episteme.² An episteme, according to Foucault, describes the several hermeneutic systems, processes, and parameters through and within which knowledge is structured and produced. An episteme is thus a way of knowing. For Foucault, the Renaissance episteme is characterized by interpretation based on similitude and resemblance. The things of this world, and those beyond it, could be understood and known because all things were related, one thing resembled another, even if that resemblance was not readily apparent or lay obscured beneath the surface. Thus, if

¹ Much work has been done, for example, on analyzing images of landscape as constructions of cultural and political agendas; see Larry Silver, “Forest Primeval: Albrecht Altdorfer and the German Wilderness Landscape,” Simiolus 13 (1983): 4–43 and Martin Warnke, Political Landscape: The Art History of Nature (London: Reaktion, 1994).

you knew something about one thing, you already potentially knew something about another. Knowledge is generated through interpreting visible signs according to their resemblance with other signs and is produced through recognizing relationships of similitude between one thing and another.

Foucault's observations are born out in sources that afford historians insight into ways of knowing nature in the early modern period. Especially useful in this regard are the writings of the less well-known German humanists and local stable-masters who focused their writings on one particular aspect of nature: the horse. By applying such criteria as the tone and language of the texts, the social status of their authors, and the physical qualities of the publications (i.e. their considerable expense), one can roughly identify the readership as elite. People interested in the care of fine horses (the main topic treated herein) and also capable of appreciating the quotes from ancient sources used so extensively, doubtlessly belonged to well-educated and affluent circles. Yet, judging from forwards and dedications, most are not addressed to members of the high German nobility, such as the Holy Roman Emperor or the electors, but are instead aimed at fellow enthusiasts who owned or cared for quality horses.

Although hardly known in scholarly circles and mostly unpublished, these sources nonetheless offer several advantages to the scholar investigating how early modern people came to "know" nature. Their frequent citation and recitation of classical texts reveal the reception of antiquity at a level and within a subject matter scholarship on Renaissance humanism does not usually address. Furthermore, in dealing with the care and training of an animal, these sources are uniquely positioned to reveal early modern assumptions about humankind's relationship to nature. Foucault's Renaissance episteme proves helpful in understanding these assumptions. When read attentively, the hippological texts demonstrate the hermeneutics of resemblance at work. In describing what is purportedly the nature of horses, the texts indicate that this knowledge is inextricably bound up with, and shaped by, contemporary comprehension of human nature. In other words, whether consciously or not, an assumed significant similitude between horse and human provided the epistemological structure and process for understanding nature. This similitude was particularly striking in the posited relationship between the females of both species, mares and women. Our early modern authors found their ideas instantiated and substantiated in texts of classical antiquity, which lent legitimacy and prestige to their claims. The present essay focuses on the textually constructed relationship between mares and women as evidence of a Renaissance episteme, as a way of knowing nature. In so doing, it also addresses the ways in which the generation of such knowledge performs ideological work in that it simultaneously provides a way of knowing gender.

Medieval and Early Modern Hippological Texts

Attention to the horse as evidenced in cultural production was neither new nor unprecedented in the early modern period. Scholars of medieval and hip-
polological history have gleaned textual references particularly to warhorses from a variety of documentary sources. Luxury manuscripts produced in the Middle Ages detailing activities of the nobility that included hunting and riding also mention horses as do medieval bestiaries and natural histories such as Albert the Great’s (ca. 1193–1280) De animalibus. Furthermore, two of the earliest post-classical European works to discuss the care of horses and the treatment of their ailments were written around the mid thirteenth century by members of Emperor Frederick II’s (1194–1250) court, Giordano Ruffo and Master Albrecht.

Ruffo’s and Master Albrecht’s medieval texts enjoyed a veritable renaissance in the early modern period through extensive replication and reproduction and later texts also incorporated ideas and information about horses drawn from medieval sources. In particular, many of the early modern texts accepted the ideals of equine conformation, character, and color described in the medieval bestiaries and in texts such as those by Albert the Great and Master Albrecht. According to this shared ideal, the perfect horse would have, for example, small pointed ears, long flanks, rounded haunches, a wide chest, a spirited nature, and a chestnut-colored coat.

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4 Luxury manuscripts include the fourteenth-century Latin Tacuinum Sanitatis in Medicina (Österreichische Nationalbibliothek) which includes a chapter on the physical benefits of ‘Equitatio; see The Four Seasons of the House of Cernut, transl. Judith Spencer (Facts on File Publications: New York, 1984). For other manuscripts, see Angela von den Driesch, Geschichte der Tiermedizin (Munich: Callwey, 1989).


6 For Giordano Ruffo, see Davis, Medieval Warhorse, 100–106. Davis also discusses the successors of Ruffo but does not mention Master Albrecht (who is also referred to as Master Albrant). For him, see von den Driesch, Tiermedizin, 60; Dénes Karasszon, Concise History of Veterinary Medicine (Budapest: Akadémiia Kiadó, 1988), 221, and Gerhard Eis, "Albrant und die Albrantforschung," Tierärztliche Umschau 15 (1960): 224–27.

7 Both Ruffo’s and Master Albrecht’s texts were often copied in manuscripts and then in printed editions; see von den Driesch, 56–57 and 60; see also Gerhard Eis, Meister Albrants Roßarzneibuch: Verzeichnis der Handschriften (Constance, 1960).

8 These descriptions of the ideal horse from medieval sources are found in White, Beasts, 87; Albert the Great, De animalibus, 103. This information is found in the many editions of Master Albrecht’s work, for example, Meister Albrecht. Ein gut erzogenbuchlin der roß (Augsburg, ca. 1485), ii r–v. The description also appears in many of the early
Despite substantive overlaps between medieval and early modern materials, the later texts become increasingly different from their predecessors in that they focus exclusively on the horse as their subject. In addition, the early modern texts move beyond descriptions of the animal's physical appearance and reiterations of unconnected equine anecdotes (although it is important to note that these topics are also included) to address issues of training, riding, breeding, healing, and maintaining horses. Brief mentions of the horse embedded within expansive medieval tracts became, in the early modern period, entire books devoted to a wide variety of specifically hippological topics, ranging from the proper selection of bits to how to establish and maintain a horse-breeding facility.

Undoubtedly several factors contributed to the development of these texts, including the deepening desire to understand and control nature which generally seems to have spurred on scientific inquiry in early modern Europe. Another factor was the horse's fundamental importance in almost every aspect of early modern life, from commerce to the waging of war, from beast of burden to object of conspicuous consumption. Scholars of early modern history have pointed to the evolving nature of warfare as a significant impetus for changes in the selective breeding of horses and thus for a more vigorous and expansive interest in the animal.\(^9\) Greater sophistication in the employment of artillery and firearms made the heavily armored knight with lance and charger increasingly obsolete and thus horses were bred to be lighter and more agile in order to be used as light cavalry at different phases of hostile engagement. As the role of the horse in warfare shifted more to the periphery, its role in personal entertainment (as a pleasure mount and for sport) advanced. Early modern texts including the famous Gli ordini da cavalcare (Naples, 1550) by Frederico Grisone (the edition consulted here was Frederico Grisone, Grisone. Hippocomic, transl. Johann Faysler, [Augsburg, 1599], 1–18). The repetition of this description needs to be thought about in a number of ways, including as substantive evidence of intertextuality between medieval and Renaissance sources, and as a scientific/literary topos. In addition, this description of ideal equine conformation has to do in some respects with ideal equine health, and thus with factors not subject to the vagaries of pure aesthetic preference; for example, the insistence that the horse's legs should be sleek and clean without swellings, or that the hooves be dry, firm, and arched is about a horse that has strong and healthy limbs and feet, free of weakness and injury that would not only blemish the appearance but would in fact cause health problems for the horse. I would also like to explore in future work the ramifications of this very detailed description for the figuration of horses in early modern art but such a topic would necessitate moving beyond the parameters of this present essay.

modern hippological texts proffered knowledge leading to the better care and training of an animal that was, after all, a significant asset for so many people. Having a more tractable horse was a matter of survival as much for the humble farmer laboring in his grainfields as for the noble knight fighting on the battlefields. Working horses that were obedient and robust were better economic producers, while pleasure horses that were well-trained and finely bred marked a superior status.

New in the early modern hippological texts, besides their exclusive focus on the horse, is their self-consciousness and the density of their references to classical antiquity. Interextuality abounds in these sources. They frequently relate the same ancient stories involving horses that Greek and Roman historians and philosophers told. We learn, for example, about Alexander the Great's (356–323 B.C.E.) heroic horse, Bucephalus, who would suffer no one else to ride him but his royal master;10 about Julius Caesar's (100–44 B.C.E.) loyal mount, Asturicus, whose front hooves were shaped like human extremities;11 and about Darius's (r. 336–330 B.C.E.) horse that made him king of Persia by neighing before the mounts of all other candidates.12 It is important to note here, however, that medieval bestiaries provided the source for some of these antique references. Bestiaries incorporated a smattering of such stories and most often repeated the old tales of Bucephalus and Asturicus. The early modern texts, however, not only integrated this material; they often greatly multiplied the number and variety of such references.

Also new in these texts is the exploration of the nature and function of the different sexes of horses, likewise often underpinned by the authority of ancient sources. This renewed interest in sexual identity and character perhaps reveals the keen interest in selective breeding as the functions of the horse shifted during the early modern period. In these explorations of horses' sexual identity we observe the hermeneutics of resemblance operating. Statements about mares sound closely related to statements about women in numerous early modern sources, particularly when they emphasize fertility and chastity.13 Extensive research on

10 Marx Fugger, Von der Gestüterey (Frankfurt, 1584), quoting Gellius and Plutarch.
12 Fugger's text is especially rich in ancient sources such as Pliny, Plato, Socrates, Strabo and Aelian. Johann Fayer, Hippatria (Frankfurt, 1576), 151r; LVC, Ritterliche Reiterkunst (Frankfurt, 1584), 1r; Ein neuer Thierbuch (Frankfurt, 1569), Mir–Mili; Peter Uffenbach, introduction to his translation of Carlo Ruini, Anatomia & Medicina Equorum Nova (Frankfurt, 1603), iiiv.
11 Fugger, Gestüterey, 12v; Fayer, Hippatria, 151r; Ein neuer Thierbuch, N.
12 Fugger, Gestüterey, 16r–v; Uffenbach, introduction to Medicina Equorum, iiiiv–iiiir.
13 The research on women in early modern Europe is more than voluminous! For useful general discussions of early modern views on women with further bibliographical references, see sources such as: Natalie Zemon Davis and Arlette Farge, eds., Renaissance and Enlightenment Paradoxes, vol. 3 of A History of Women in the West (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press, 1993); Margaret L. King, Women of the Renaissance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Margaret L. King and Albert Rabil Jr., "The Other Voice in
the history of women in early modern Europe has well established that these two aspects laid the foundation, generally speaking, for the construction of female identity. A woman's reproductive capacity defined not only her social role but also her moral character, and the latter was deemed dangerously unstable. Although a woman was capable of goodness, especially when her reproductive capacity was controlled and channeled through the ideal of chastity (leaving her only two legitimate roles: unmarried virgin or faithful wife), her purported inherent propensity towards evil, that Neo-Platonists believed was biologically determined, rendered her an object of constant suspicion, supervision, and surveillance. If in the terms of semiotics we consider woman as the signifier and female identity as the signified, then we understand that this identity needs to be constantly redefined and renegotiated, for all social sign systems are inherently unstable. Comparisons between female identity in the animal kingdom and in humans, even if implicit and unconscious, could aid in the stabilization of that identity. Essentially I am arguing that these hippological sources act—at least in part—in just these ways. Certainly their authors did not set pen to paper thinking “today I shall understand women by making observations about mares”—Yet, in looking at animals, authors also saw what they thought they knew about people. This accounts for the similarities between what was written about mares and what was generally thought about women. The Renaissance episteme, with its emphasis on similitude and resemblance, only reinforces this perceptual strategy. Still, female identity in the animal kingdom is no less a pesky problem than it is among humans; the identity of the female horse, just like that of the woman, cannot be wrested from indeterminacy and, in these texts, fluctuates between the good and the evil according to the very same biological and moral criteria used in the construction of human female identity.

Mares and Women: Positive Aspects

Mares were sometimes used as draft animals and mounts, although less frequently than stallions or geldings because they were considered weaker. According to the texts, the mares’ main function was as breeding stock. For this purpose, one source mentions that the mare should be beautiful, while another asserts that stallions liked their breeding partners to be clean and well-decorated. But surprisingly then, the few positive things the texts say about mares relates

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Fugger, Gestüterey, 75r; to be fair, Fugger says that the stallion should also be beautiful. Hörwart von Hohenberg, Von der Hochberhümpfen/Adelichen und Ritterlichen Kunst der Reytrey (Tegernsee, 1577), 11v–12r.
to their reproductive status and maternal nature. Marx Fugger (1529–1597), educated as a humanist and head of the Fugger banking and trading firm, published an extensive tract on horse-breeding in 1584. According to the introduction Fugger wrote Von der Gestütterey (on Horse Breeding) not for "patri- cians and potentates who have those in their employ who understand much more than I" but "for my own entertainment and satisfaction, and also for the pleasure of many good fellows who might have an affection for riding and the opportunity to keep a few mares." Although Fugger's introduction sounds quite unpretentious here, the book's production details suggest the probability of a far from plebeian readership. The 129 over-sized folios are peppered with extensive Latin quotes, and all twenty-four chapters are headed by beautiful woodcut illustrations by Just Amman (1539–1591). Discussions about prices for horses, about the duties and tasks of the stable master and his underlings, and about ancient references to hippology in their original languages indicate that the "good fellows" Fugger addressed were all well-educated men of means, even if they were not situated at the apex of the social pyramid.

Fugger praises mares for being excellent mothers, a quality, he says, that the Tartars deliberately exploited; they rode mares who had recently foaled on night raids because the female horses would be so intent on returning to their offspring that they could easily find their way back home even in total darkness. Fugger also relates the story by the second-century C.E. Roman writer Aelian (b. ca. 170) about how Darius avoided capture at the abortive battle of Issus (333 B.C.E.) by fleeing on the back of a mare anxious to return to her foal. He then trots out the story of the unnamed Scythian king who tried to breed a stallion to its former dam. The chaste horses would have none of it, but they are tricked into the shameful act by the stable-hand: the mare's face is covered so that she cannot see it is her son who mounts her, and he cannot recognize his mother (!). There are several versions of the story's tragic end. Aelian, frequently cited by Fugger, and whose book On the Characteristics

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16 Fugger, Gestütterey, fol. iiiir–v: "Ich habe es auch die warheit zusagen nicht [...] geschrieben [...] für grosse Herren und Potentaten/welliche selbst Leut haben/so dieser Sachen verständiger seind als ich/sondern für meine Kurzweil und Lust/ach sunst vielen guten Gesellen zugefallen/die etwain eine Naigung zu der Reutterey unnd Gelegenheit haben etliche Stuten Zu halten." All translations in this essay from the German are my own.

17 For the prints of Just Amman, see F. W. H. Hollstein, German Engravings, Eichings and Woodcuts, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Menno Hertzberger, 1955), 8–53.

of Animals was first printed in 1556 in Zurich, maintains that both the mare and her son kill themselves when they learn what they have done.\textsuperscript{19} Fugger mentions three different endings: in one, only the stallion kills himself; in a second, cited by Fugger as written by Varro (116–27 B.C.E.), the stallion kills the stable-hand;\textsuperscript{20} and in the third, the mare kills the stable-master and then even digs up his body with her hooves and with her teeth bites it into tiny pieces.\textsuperscript{21} Clearly then, such authors constructed knowledge about mares from the categories of powerful maternal instincts and “natural” chastity.

Anton Woensam’s (ca. 1493/6–ca. 1541) woodcut illustrating the Allegory of the Wise Woman from ca. 1525 (Fig. 1) draws a parallel between the chastity of horses and that of women.\textsuperscript{22} Woensam’s woodcut offers a visual and textual model of the ideal, virtuous woman, as the caption makes clear: “Whichever woman follows this [model] is well protected by virtue.”\textsuperscript{23} In the early modern period, chastity almost always provided the basis for, or was a major constitutive part of, female virtue and honor. The woodcut couches its textual message in distinctly mercantile tones. The woman, whose lips are padlocked shut, clearly and literally has no voice. Instead, we only hear the voice of the text’s author, who admonishes women to guard their treasure of virtue wisely as if it is a precious resource that must not be squandered. The woodcut also appropriates two distinct visual discourses, the symbolic and the scientific, and blends them in a fascinating construction of early modern ideal female identity that, from a late-modern perspective, borders on the monstrous. Woensam’s woman stands displayed facing the viewer (but of course averts her eyes), her body encumbered by symbols and anatomized into discrete units of virtue that are connected to rhyming explicative texts by straight lines, much like a kind of scientific diagram. Here the body does not, however, serve as the site of scientific display that bares anatomical truths lying beneath the surface of a dissected corpse, for example. Rather, it is the locus of ideological overlay where strict notions of female virtue and honor cover, hide, and control the woman’s body. For example, her waist is entwined with snakes (according to the text, to guard her body against shame and scandal), and her lips are pierced through and sealed with a golden padlock to prevent them from opening in useless

\textsuperscript{19} Aelian, Animals, vol. 1, IV7, 231–233.

\textsuperscript{20} Marcus Renatus Varro was the Roman author of the three-volume book De re rustica. There were several sixteenth-century editions. See, for example, Libri de re rustica (Venice, 1514).

\textsuperscript{21} Fugger, Gestütterey, 10r.

\textsuperscript{22} Max Geisberg, The German Single-leaf Woodcut: 1500–1550, vol. 4, revised and edited by Walter L. Strauss (New York: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1974), G.1558. The woodcut is discussed in Grössinger, Picturing Women, 43–45. My thanks to Susan Karant-Nunn for reminding me of this woodcut, and of Erhard Schoen’s Wives Market, as discussed below, in terms of their applicability to the present investigation.

\textsuperscript{23} Allegory of a Wise Woman, “Welliche Fraw darnach thut/Die ist ein ehren wol behut.”
Fig. 1: Anton Woensam, Allegory of the Wise Woman, ca. 1525. Woodcut, Graphische Sammlung, Albertina, Vienna.
chatter through which her honor would be lost. A giant key is aimed directly
at her ear as if poised to forcibly penetrate that interior space to open her ear
to the word of God in order to increase her piety. Strikingly, the hem of
the woman’s dress falls not upon human ankles and feet but upon a horse’s fet-
locks and hooves. Here the woman states: “I should walk on horses’ feet in
order to stand fast in my honor; how sweet it is not to fall into sin.”
Although in this reference the horse is not specifically designated a mare, the con-
nection between equine and human virtue based essentially on notions of chastity
has been clearly established.

Fertility is another positive, and as it turns out, useful aspect associated with
mares. Marx Fugger maintains that placing the skull of a mare in your garden
will make everything grow well and that it is especially good against caterpil-
Iars. Johann Fayser (fl. 1570s) an aspiring but ailing humanist who received
his Masters in the liberal arts at the University of Frankfurt an der Oder in-
cluded the same information in Hippiatria (1576). Fayser’s book is a pretentious
compilation of ancient hippological sources, preceded by an utterly
obsequious dedication directed at the Margrave George Frederick of Brandenburg
(1539–1603). In the dedication’s fawning prose, Fayser flatters the Margrave and
his family while seeking to establish his own social credibility by repeated-
edly emphasizing how the wealthy but recently deceased Augsburg merchant,
Joseph Höchstetter, acted as his close personal mentor. The book’s tone and
dedication certainly indicate that Fayser, a kind of sixteenth-century German
real-life version of Dickens’s Uriah Heep, hoped to attract an elite audience
to his textual performance of humanist knowledge that can only be character-
ized as painfully self-conscious. Fayser quotes Pliny (23–79 C.E.) as the source
for the horticultural efficacy of mares’ skulls, and he also includes the story of
the Scythian king, citing Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) and Columella (fl. first cen-
tury C.E.). Furthermore, according to Fugger, if a woman drinks mares’ milk,
she will quickly and easily conceive. Some mares are so fertile that all they
need is the wind to become pregnant; Fayser supports this contention with a
passage from Aristotle. The number of references to the body parts of female
horses serving as household and farmyard remedies has no parallel in references
to body parts of male equines. The only specific, practical mention I found was
the recommendation, repeated in several sources, to place stallions’ teeth under-
neath a person’s pillow as a highly effective remedy for snoring.

kan steen/Auff das ich nicht in sünde fall/ist stüß.”
25 Fugger, Gestüteter, 24v.
26 Fayser, Hippiatria, 145v for his reference to the mare skull; 153v for the Scythian
king.
27 Fugger, Gestüteter, 24v. This is also asserted in Albert the Great, Thierbuch (Frankfurt,
1545), Ev and in Aelian, Animals, vol. 1, IV.6, 221.
28 Fayser, Hippiatria, 152v.
29 Fugger, Gestüteter, 26r; Albert the Great, Thierbuch, Ev.
Sixteenth-century authors praised a mare's fertility and her reproductive role, but they also employed these qualities to keep mares literally unshod and pregnant in the paddock. Fugger notes that he had seen mares used in battle in Italy, but argued that once a mare has been bred, she should not be used for warfare or even riding. According to Fugger, her back weakens after foaling and her udder gets in the way. Conversely, a mare who has been extensively worked amounts to little as a broodmare, for she will have trouble conceiving and nursing since her juices are all dried up. At the end of his discussion about desiccated working mares, Fugger draws an explicit connection between horses and humans, stating that he “could also well prove this by recourse to examples from us humans.”

Certainly, for Fugger and his contemporaries, there seemed to be a powerful connection posited between the females of the two species. The sources offer further implicit evidence of this perceived tie. Fugger’s chapter on mares presents one of the few woodcuts showing a horse, presumably a mare, ridden by a woman. Mare’s milk as a cure for a woman’s infertility has already been mentioned. Moreover, Fayser maintains that, according to Pliny, a mare in foal will spontaneously abort if a menstruating woman touches her. Thus these sources construct direct and physical relationships between mares and women in which even the bodily fluids of one strongly influence the bodily fluids of another. In addition, positive aspects of female identity for both equine and human are founded upon parallel notions of fertility, maternal instinct, and—the most powerful expression of female honor in early modern Europe—chastity.

Mares and Women: Negative Aspects
Not only fertility, maternity, and chastity, however, tied mares and women together. The females of both species were thought inferior to males. Mares and women were believed to share not only qualities contemporaneously deemed positive but also those deemed negative. Such inconsistencies—here in the sense of what it means to be female—link up nicely with the theoretical interpretation of female identity in terms of semiotics. The key notion in semiotics rests on the inherent instability of the sign, which is in constant need of renegotiation and redefinition. The frequent association in these texts between that which is female and that which is on the left (“sinistra/sinister”) side likewise reveals assumptions about female inferiority. Not only is woman’s place

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30 Fugger, Gestütetery, 76v: “Dann die Adern und die ienige theyl des Leibs so Gesäßt und Millich machen sollen sind eingedorret.”
31 Fugger, Gestütetery, 75v: “kündt auch solliches wol mit einem Exempel von uns Menschen beweisen.”
32 Each of Fugger’s chapters is provided with a woodcut which in every case is specifically related to the contents of the chapter’s text. Therefore, the illustration of the woman riding side-saddle for the chapter on mares seems to be significant.
33 Fayser, Hippiatria, 154r.
designated on the left (a correspondence that dates from Aristotle and which is also manifested in sixteenth-century art), so, too, is the mare’s, or to be more exact, the filly’s (a female horse under one year of age). Ruellius’s book on equine medicine (Roßartzney) provides evidence of this association.35 Ruellius (1474/6–1537), court physician to Francis I of France (1494–1547), translated a collection of byzantine hippological sources from Greek into Latin. Dedicated to the French king, his book was first published in 1530.36 Gregor Zechendorff, a physician from Eger, then translated Ruellius from Latin into German, and this edition appeared in 1575. As in the other hippological sources cited here, the social ranks of those involved in the production and reception of the book indicate a learned and prosperous audience. The specific nature of the contents and presumably the expense of a weighty and oversized tome further substantiate this claim. Ruellius quotes passages regarding horse breeding from the byzantine hippologist Anatolios (ca. 350–400 C.E.).37 Anatolios maintains that if, after mating, the stallion dismounts from the right side of the mare, he has just sired a colt (a male); if he dismounts from the left, it will be a filly. If the breeder wants to control the sex of the offspring and desires a colt, he should bind the stallion’s left testicle—in other words, put the left side, the source of the inferior female, out of action. Similar advice was given regarding human intercourse: in order to conceive a male child, the woman should lie on her right side during or after sex, while the man should ejaculate only from his right testicle (no one seemed quite sure exactly how to put this theory into practice, however).38

The association between the female and the left side also supposedly designates her as more susceptible to evil influences because she is an inherently flawed and unstable creature. Again, Ruellius furnishes some implicit evidence. In quoting an extensive passage from another byzantine hippologist, Theomnestos (ca. 300–350 C.E.), he describes a kind of madness to which mares in particular are prone.39 When so afflicted, a mare frantically races around as if searching for something. She becomes so irrational that she forgets to eat and often such mares starve themselves to death. In fact, according to Theomnestos, what such a mare is so desperately seeking is a stallion, and her lust to mate

37 Ruellius, Roßartzney, xxxviii. For Anatolios, see von den Driesch, Tiermedizin, 32.
39 Ruellius, Roßartzney, xxxixv.
literally drives her mad. The cause of this alarming affliction offers the clues for its alleviation, for it is the mare’s catching sight of her own reflection in a body of water and imagining herself as beautiful that brings on the madness. Evidently one is to understand that the mare’s perception of her own beauty engenders this crazed lust, which can be cured by showing the mare her reflection again in a manner that she will see herself as ugly. According to Columella, on whose first-century C.E. text On Agriculture this story is clearly based, the way to render the mare unattractive is to cut her mane unevenly so that it appears disheveled and spoils her appearance.40

The correspondence between a long-maned mare and a proud disposition was already well established in antiquity. Thus, the ancients advocated ruining the mare’s hair as the surest way to humble such narcissistic arrogance. According to Aelian,

[r]he horse is generally a proud creature. But it is chiefly a mare with a long mane that is so full of airs and graces. For instance, she scorns to be covered by an ass but is glad to mate with a horse, regarding herself as only fit for the greatest. Accordingly, those who wish to have mules born, knowing this characteristic, clip the mare’s mane in a haphazard fashion and then put asses to her. Although ashamed at first, she admits her present ignoble mate.41

The Greek poet Semonides (fl. seventh century B.C.E.) explicitly connected long-maned mares and women. In iambic verses written to censure women, he describes the ancient Greek version of a trophy wife:

Another [woman] is the child of a dainty long-maned mare: she refuseth menial tasks and toil; she’ll neither set hand to mill nor take up sieve, nor cast forth the muck, nor, for that she shunneth the soot, will she sit beside the oven. She taketh a mate only of necessity. Every day she will wash herself twice, or even thrice, and anointeth her with unguents. She ever weareth her hair deep-combed and wreathed with flowers. Such a wife may be a fair sight for other men, but she’s an ill to her husband if he be not a despot or a king, such as take pride in adornments like to her.42

Semonides’ critique was well-known in early modern Germany. Indeed, a pamphlet published in 1611 defended women specifically against Semonides’ argument.43 In so doing, however, the pamphlet nonetheless leaves intact the

40 Lucius Junius Moderatus Columella, On Agriculture, transl. E. S. Forster (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1968), IIIIV, 213. Columella was apparently well known in German humanist circles; he had been translated into German already in 1538 (von den Driesch, Tiermedizin, 26), and he is frequently quoted by Fayser. On Agriculture was written in ca. 60 C.E.
43 Ehrenfried Liebesch, Eine Defension Schrifft/Des Erbarn Weiblichen Geschlechts/
standards of chastity and modesty as the proper measure of a good woman by quoting the book of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) on its title-page: "There is nothing better on earth than a modest woman and there is nothing more precious than a chaste woman." According to Aelian, the opposite of a virtuous woman is a lecherous one. Classical texts, including Aelian's, referred to the latter as a mare.44

Particularly revealing about the assumptions regarding a woman's natural propensity for evil is the fact that mostly women were persecuted as witches in the early modern period.45 Heinrich Kramer and Jakob Sprenger gave powerful voice to this assumption in the Malleus maleficarum (Hammer of witches; 1487): "All witchcraft comes from carnal lust, which is in women insatiable."46 As Charles Zicka has demonstrated, the figure of the female witch often appears in images accompanied by different animals, especially goats, the ultimate embodiment of carnal lust since antiquity.47 Zika focuses on an engraving by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528) from about 1505 that shows a witch riding backwards on a goat. However, the early modern German artist who seems to have been particularly concerned with figuring the witch was one of Dürer's younger associates, Hans Baldung Grien (1484/5–1545). The goat appears in Baldung's witch imagery as well, such as in his famous chiaroscuro woodcut of a Witches' Sabbath from 1511.48 Yet, the horse also figures prominently. In one of Baldung's most enigmatic works, commonly referred to as The Bewitched Groom (1544), a stable-hand lies stretched out on the floor of the stable as if unconscious or transfixed (Fig. 2). His body has landed on top of his pitchfork, and the curly-comb that he had been holding lies just beyond the reach of his immobilized hand. To the right, an elderly woman with a burning torch leans into the stable area through a window and, with a malevolently triumphant grin, looks down upon the body of the supine groom. Directly beyond the groom's head is the figure of a magnificent horse seen from the rear in a three-quarters view. The

44 Aelian, Animals, vol. 1, IV.11, 225.
46 Cited in Brauner, Fearless Wives, 3.
horse, with open mouth and intense eye, turns around to transfix the viewer with a startlingly penetrating gaze. Art historians and other scholars have tried to make some sense out of this bizarre trio of figures. The scholar on explicative narratives almost always have in common is the assumption that the woman is a witch who has cast a spell on the groom and that the horse basically shares some kind of demonic power with her. This connection between the horse and the witch makes sense in terms of the association between this animal and the experience or sin of passion and lust. However, what most art historians have failed to notice is that Baldung's horse is clearly a mare. They usually assume that the horse is a stallion, probably because of its powerfully muscled hindquarters and thickly crested neck, conformational qualities that are commonly associated with male horses but that are also by no means unusual in mares. Nonetheless, Baldung's horse is swishing her tail, and in so doing allows the viewer to glimpse her vulva (the anal opening would be situated higher up, directly below the dock of the tail). In addition, the angle in which the horse is positioned affords a direct view between the legs where one would be able easily to see a male's testicles but they are clearly lacking. As Baldung's earlier woodcut series depicting sexual activities of wild horses in the woods (1534) makes clear, the artist did not take the anatomical correctness of his horses for granted but obviously knew what he was looking at and what it meant. That the horse is female is significant for the interpretation of the print, which, as I will argue elsewhere, references bestiality, a practice often associated in the early modern period with witchcraft. Bestiality is also men-

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50 In "Art, Culture, and Mentality," Hoak even discusses interpretations that directly equate the identity of the witch and the horse, namely, that they are two different manifestations of the same identity.


tioned in some of the same ancient sources specifically quoted in sixteenth-century hippological texts. Thus the female witch and the female horse appear here in league with one another in their combined will to overpower physically and undo morally the hapless male whose codpiece figures so prominently in the print’s composition.

Further evidence also suggests that early modern writers and riders sometimes thought of mares as particularly difficult and headstrong, both undesirable traits in a domesticated animal. In the sixteenth century, a number of hippological works illustrated and explained different kinds of bits for riding horses. According to these sources, the correct selection of bit from literally hundreds of different options depended on an individual horse’s breed, temperament, conformation, way of going, training problems, and even its sex. Several books clearly label bits “for mares” (für Stuten). As these bits appear in editions written in both Latin and German, they again indicate that the intended audience was learned and international. Careful observation of these woodcuts reveals that the bits recommended for mares were very severe. Their extremely high ports would exert great pressure on the sensitive roof of the mouth whenever the reins were activated. No anatomical difference between the mouth of a mare and that of a stallion or gelding justifies the difference or explains the extra severity; indeed, a stallion’s full-grown canine teeth, lacking in a mare’s mouth, would perhaps warrant the use of a harsher bit for the male rather than the female. Although the illustration of these bits prove that mares were actually ridden and not just bred, their design suggests that the operative assumption in riding mares was that they were especially intractable and difficult to control. Current ideas about women perhaps influenced this assumption. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the use of an implement known as “the scold’s bridle” certainly seems to signal a belief that women and mares shared a potential unwillingness to submit. “The scold’s bridle” was a kind of harness with an iron noose to be placed over a woman’s head in order to hold her tongue; it was to be used by husbands to control their wives’

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54 For example, the story of the groom Eudmus as related by Fayser in Hippatria, 153v. My work on Baldung’s prints is part of a larger study of the horse in early modern visual culture in which I am currently involved.

55 Hierin begriffene Pis/xegen klärlich an/wie ein jedes Roß/jung und als sol gezämt/dadurch ime/angenomene pässe gewanheit/ubelstandt/und untugent/benomen/und abgewen/ten werden mag ... (Regensburg, 1539); and Hippatria. De cura, educatione & institutione Equorum, und cum variis ac novis frenorum exemplis. Marstallerei. Von Erziehung/Arzney und Abrichtung der Roß/samt mancherhand neuer Formen der Zau und Gebiß/Zu allerley mängeln und underrichtung der Pferd (Frankfurt, 1550).


57 My thanks to Dr. Mike Hutchison, DVM, for this information on equine oral anatomy.
utterances and as a shaming device meant to label publicly individual women as inappropriately vocal.\textsuperscript{58}

Along the same lines, Erhard Schoen’s (ca. 1491–1542) woodcut illustration of the Wives’ Market (1533) pictures two women in the foreground crawling along on their hands and knees with bridles strapped to their heads (Fig. 3).\textsuperscript{59} A large metal muzzle (Maulkorb) is attached to one woman’s bridle. Sixteenth-century German books illustrating different bits recommended such devices for the restraint of vicious horses who were known to bite and snap.\textsuperscript{60} The women in Schoen’s woodcut are led around by men holding the reins. In the background, a man bends down to peer into the mouth and check the teeth of a third bridled woman, just as if she really were a horse.

Thus a variety of texts, images, and cultural artifacts suggest that in some instances, both mares and women were seen to share similar and distinctly negative characteristics. No matter whether human or equine, the female was supposedly vain, lustful, evil, headstrong, intractable, and irascible. Both woman and mare faced harsh measures directed at curbing their willful ways. Such measures ranged from the ideological—including demonization and humiliation in images such as Baldung’s and Schoen’s—to the physical—disfigurement and harsh bits for the mare, and the scold’s bridle for the woman.

Conclusion: Nature and Gender, Construction and Control

Tractability and control were the foundation of riding in the early modern period and they were also at the heart of relationships between the sexes. Thus several sources insist that a good horse should be like a good woman. Although these references do not specifically refer to mares, they nonetheless indicate the gendered nature of equine knowledge. In his Noble Art of Riding published in 1577, Hörwart von Hohenberg writes that a fine horse has three qualities, borrowing each one from the following animals: a wolf, a fox, and a woman.\textsuperscript{61} Like the wolf, the horse should have keen vision, a hearty appetite, and a strong back; like the fox, straight, short, and pointed ears, a long thick tail, and a smooth, light gait; and like a woman, the horse should be proud, have a beautiful chest, body, and hair, and it should enjoy being ridden (lassen gem


\textsuperscript{60} See for example, Hans Creutzberger, Eysentliche/woolerisse Contraractur und Formen der Gebiß . . . (Vienna, 1591). For more information on early modern bit books, see Pia F. Cuneo, “Just a Bit of Control: Early Modern German Bit Books and the History of the Renaissance” in Karen Raber, ed., The Kingdom of the Horse, forthcoming.

\textsuperscript{61} Hörwart von Hohenberg, Kunst der Reiterey, 3v.
auftreten). A broadsheet from 1618 proffered similar knowledge. Here the horse should be like a wolf with sharp eyes, strong teeth, and thick coat; and like a fox with a small head, short ears, and bushy tail. The broadsheet adds qualities from a hare: speed, agility, and the ability to jump; and from a donkey: a strong back, good feet, and sturdy hooves. Each of the four animals is illustrated in four rondels which frame the central etching of the ideal horse embodying all of these qualities. However, the text goes on to say that the horse should also have four qualities of a woman:

As a woman is well-breasted in front, so it is also a charming attribute for a horse to have a beautiful chest and a good backside. A young wife is eager to be ridden and moves very gently without sweating. A good horse should do the same: it should be eager to be ridden by its master and trot gently away with him.

Clearly, these texts actively constructed knowledge about the horse within the framework of gender. Built into information about a horse's—especially a mare's—character and disposition are crucial assumptions about human gender roles. The ideal for both the female human and her equine counterpart blends qualities of physical beauty and joyful submission. The reality of the females in these texts, however, presents a different picture: although useful for breeding and naturally inclined to maternity, mares are not suitable for serious work. Their physical frailty and certain key but cumbersome features of female anatomy impede their usefulness. Equally bothersome is their susceptibility to evil and their tendency toward intractability. Much of the evidence for these supposedly natural qualities comes from antiquity, but also from similar assumptions about early modern women.

Hippological discourse thus functioned to display knowledge about antiquity and the art of riding, subjects which appealed directly to the interests and identities of early modern elites. Hippological discourse also functioned

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62 Kurzer und eigentliche Beschreibung der 16 Eigenschaften welche ein schön und wal proportioniertes Pferdt an sich haben sol. 1618; IP55, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel.


64 Several hippological sources either assume or explain that riding, practiced as an art, as the domain of the social elite; see for example: Ein Neue und bewerte Röbartzey... (Strasbourg, 1583), 5, where the author states that "sonderlich ist dieses Thier [i.e. the horse] den hohen adelichen und fürtleichen Personen/ihrer Ehrwürden und Glori zu mehrern Schein gerdnet/mit welchem sie nit allein iring pracht führen/sondern auch zu mancherley gebrauch der Kriegsrüustung brauchen"; Ritterliche Reiterkunst (Frankfurt, 1584) which already indicates in its title that riding is not only a noble art but an art
to reinforce existing gender stereotypes and thereby to control and stabilize gender identities by circuitous but ideologically effective logic; assumptions about women are transposed onto the animal kingdom, where they become the natural proof of things, and, as such, are then transported back again into the human realm. Herein lies the greater value of these sixteenth-century hippological sources. Although they do not add anything new or distinctive to the catalog of characteristics generally attributed to women in other early modern sources, the hippological texts nonetheless provide crucial evidence about how female identity was constructed (through recourse to natural and antique discourses) and about how assumptions regarding that identity permeated a sphere of cultural production not usually associated with the study of gender issues.

In describing ways of breeding, training, riding, and caring for horses, early modern German hippological texts contributed to the production of knowledge about the animal kingdom. Although this did not constitute their primary goal, these texts nonetheless harnessed such knowledge for the practical purposes of effective equine management. A careful reading of these sources reveals a subtext in which knowledge articulated about the nature of horses is inflected with knowledge about the nature of humans. Specifically, both positive and negative gender stereotypes associated with women shimmer through the accounts describing mares. These texts then offer suggestive examples of the rich complexity involved in the production of knowledge. They demonstrate that ways of knowing nature in early modern Germany were not simply the results of dispassionate observation but were constituted by the dynamic interface between the animal kingdom and human society.

of the nobility; and Hörwart von Hohenberg whose title indicates the same: Von der Hochherhämpten/Adelichen und Ritterlichen Kunst der Reitterey (Tegernsee, 1577).