

Equine Fictions

Equine Fictions:

*Human–Horse Relationships in
Twenty-First-Century Writing*

By

Jopi Nyman

Cambridge
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This book is dedicated to my parents and Kristiina.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ix
Chapter One.....	1
Introduction	
Part I: Autobiographical Perspectives	
Chapter Two	21
Intimate Human–Horse Relationships: Affect and Therapy in Susan Richards’s <i>Chosen by a Horse: How a Broken Horse Fixed a Broken Heart</i>	
Chapter Three	39
Riding towards Healing in Rupert Isaacson’s <i>The Horse Boy</i>	
Chapter Four	55
Politics of Horsemanship: Buck Brannaman, Trust, and Discipline	
Part II: Representing Humans and Horses in Fiction	
Chapter Five	77
Land, Humans, and Horses in Gillian Mears’s <i>Foal’s Bread</i>	
Chapter Six	97
Negotiating Fandom and Nostalgia in <i>Follyfoot</i> Fanfiction	
Chapter Seven.....	123
Horsescapes: Space, Nation, and Human–Horse Relations in Jane Smiley’s <i>Horse Heaven</i>	
Appendix	145
Bibliography	147
Index	161

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Framing the Study

While James Bond films may not be the most obvious examples of cultural representations of human–horse relationships, they present some of the memorable moments of human–horse interaction. These include the use of the famous *Il Palio di Siena* racing event organized in Piazza del Campo Siena, Italy since the seventeenth century (see “The Palio Horse Race” n.d.) as the backdrop of the opening scene of *Quantum of Solace* (2008), the presence of an equestrian portrait of King William III in M’s office in *Moonraker* (1979), and horse races in Ascot, Britain, in *A View to a Kill* (1985), where Bond meets his enemy, Max Zorin, a ruthless French horse owner reliant on illicit means and doping to win races. Filmed at the Château de Chantilly, a castle in Chantilly, France, located next to the Living Museum of the Horse in Chantilly’s Great Stables (*Grandes Écuries*), *A View to a Kill* foregrounds the culture of horse racing and in particular underlines its links with Englishness (see “Château de Chantilly, France” n.d.). Intent on finding out about Zorin’s plans, Bond, under the alias of James St. John Smythe, visits the horse auction organized by Zorin at his Chantilly farm playing the role of an eccentric and wealthy upper-class Englishman whose apparent sincerity is in contrast with the values of his cunning Continental others such as Zorin.

These references to horses, while minor at first glance, carry significant affective and political power, as the case of the Bond film *Moonraker* (dir. Lewis Gilbert) shows. This film, also involved in the making of Englishness in the manner of *A View to a Kill* (dir. John Glen) attributes such powers to the equestrian portrait of William III, popularly known as King Billy, by the Dutch artist Jan Wyck (1690), a painting that is shown repeatedly in *Moonraker*. This canonical painting links horses with power and nationalism by revealing that they are embedded in discourses of nation and politics. The portrait is first displayed briefly when 007 is briefed in M’s office about his task and, more significantly, in a later episode when he is about to lose consciousness in a high-G centrifuge at the hands of Hugo

Drax, a billionaire planning to destroy the earth. The act of remembering and representing the painting at a moment when Bond is about to sacrifice his life for his country links him on one hand with Englishness and its desired values of loyalty, courage, and endurance, also signified in King William III's leading presence in the battlefield in the original painting. On the other hand, it also links him with the discourse of English nationalism and exceptionalism since the military conflict depicted in the painting is the Battle of Boyne fought between the Protestant King William and James VII, the Catholic king of Scotland, at Boyne, Ireland, in 1690, where the English triumphed over King James's army. Whether Bond identifies himself with the English king, portrayed as a figure of authority and power in the painting or as his reliable servant, the white horse—a symbol of heroism as such—remains unknown, but the use of this particular equestrian portrait depicting a crucial moment in Anglo-Irish relationships for hundreds of years in a film released in June 1979, *Moonraker* addresses both global and domestic terrorism. In so doing it also promotes an English perception of the conflict, a view that was also adopted by the numerous murals painted by Northern Irish loyalists since the 1980s where Wyck's painting and the horseback king often serve as a visual source or "founding myth" (Solleder 2016: 61). In other words, King William and his horse embody English values and their triumph over other cultures in the seventeenth century as well as in the late twentieth.

While the horses in the Bond films remain minor and the perspective anthropocentric, these examples show that representations of horses are embedded in political discourses and allow for the performance of diverse identities. The power of horse representations—as of animal representations more generally—is in that they are highly flexible and gain varied meanings in different historical, cultural, and social contexts. Similarly, their presence in globalized popular culture such as Bond films reveals the ubiquity of animals in the world around us, as well as showing how important and multi-layered human–animal relationships are, but also that they are not beyond ideology and politics. In this context the role of the horse is markedly important and deserves to be examined: horses have played a significant role in human life owing to their importance at various historical periods from prehistory until the industrial revolution, and continue to do so even though technological development has meant that people and horses no longer work together as in an imagined pastoral and pre-industrial past. As Nora Schuurman writes, the relationships between humans and horses are characteristically "based on individual communication and partnership between" the two species and are thus approachable through analyses of "everyday encounters and interactions" (2017a: 39).

As a sign of this, even today human–horse relationships generate strong emotional bonds in the contexts of leisure and sport, for instance. This relationship is also at the core of this book. I will address, through selected case studies, the role of affect and politics in human–horse relationships as represented in Anglophone writing, both autobiographical and fictional. This focus on horses and their representation distinguishes the volume from many other current studies that tend to deal with a larger variety of different non-human animals and their representation. By concentrating on one particular species, *Equus caballus*, this study aims to offer more depth to the analysis of equine texts as well as to underline their cultural significance as narratives of close human–animal relationships. The motivation for the study of horses is based on a number of reasons that underline their special status. First, as herd animals they have a distinctive species identity and behavioural difference from other common companion species such as dogs and cats (Dashper 2017: 5–6). Second, humans and horses share a long history of co-existence that extends to the current day, including human–horse relationships in farming and hunting as well as their historical significance in industrialization and contemporary popularity in sport and leisure more generally. Third, they have generated a strong symbolism in different cultures and are represented widely in the arts and literature in ways that call for cultural and historical readings. Horses, in other words, have long fascinated humans in innumerable ways.

Rather than providing a full narrative of human–horse relationships throughout history, this book addresses the topic by presenting a variety of case studies from autobiographical and fictional writing in English published since 2000. The selection of the case studies from this period whose horse representations remain under-studied has taken into account such issues as the text’s popularity amongst the reading public (contemporary autobiographical texts by Brannaman, Isaacson, and Richards, and *Follyfoot* fan fiction), and the central role allotted to horses in highbrow fictional texts. In the novels to be discussed, horses may become central and focalizing characters, as in *Horse Heaven*, by the US novelist Jane Smiley, or the division into human and horse is problematized, as happens in *Foal’s Bread* by the late Australian writer Gillian Mears. Focusing on significant horse-themed fictional and autobiographical narratives, this book provides contextualized readings of the ways in which the lives of equines and humans are intertwined in modern culture. Rather than approaching horses as mere symbols or as tokens of pre-modern life, the case studies emphasize the ways in which these animals are present as well as represented in human worlds. Combined, the case studies seek to address the close relationship between humans and horses and to promote new ways to approach its

textual representation in different cultural and discursive contexts. In so doing this study contributes to the rapidly developing field of human–animal studies in general and the study of literary horses in particular. Before introducing the individual analyses presented in the two parts of the book, this introductory chapter will first present the aims of the study and then contextualize it in current trends within the larger field of human–animal studies in general and the study of horses in particular.

Context I: Human–Animal Studies

In the general field of human–animal studies it is possible to distinguish between several trends or methodologies that inform current research and its foci. In the introduction to their recent essay collection *Shared Lives of Humans and Animals: Animal Agency in the Global North*, Tuomas Räsänen and Taina Syrjämaa distinguish between three main approaches: researchers’ “study of human images of and attitudes to animals”; animal ethics and animal rights; and animal agency where animals are understood as “actors in human communities” (2017: 1). The approaches are not mutually exclusive but indicate different ways of relating to animals and their participation in society in general as well as different ways of thinking about non-humans. Contrary to popular perceptions, human–animal studies is not the mere application of animal rights activism following in the footsteps of writers such as Peter Singer and his influential *Animal Liberation* (1975). As McHugh and Marvin suggest in their introduction to *Routledge Handbook of Human–Animal Studies*, several scholars such as Vicki Hearne and Donna Haraway have been influenced by other intellectual traditions such as post-structuralism that have made it possible to go beyond modernity’s binaries to understand animals as “actors of a different order, who can appear at breathtaking moments to be performing with people in ways that never add up to a simple sum of human and animal parts” (2014: 5). In so doing, scholars have challenged conventional binaries allegedly separating humans from animals, mind from body, and culture from nature. As Donna Haraway, talking about the entanglement of what she calls “companion species,” puts it:

To knot companion and species together in encounter, in regard and respect, is to enter the world of becoming with, where *who and what are* is precisely what is at stake. In “Unruly Edges: Mushrooms as Companion Species,” Anna Tsing writes, “Human nature is an interspecies relationship.” [...] That realization, in Beatriz Preciado’s idiom, promises an *autre-mondialisation*. Species interdependence is the name of the worlding game on earth, and that game must be one of response and respect. That is the play of companion

species learning to pay attention. Not much is excluded from the needed play, not technologies, commerce, organisms, landscapes, peoples, practices. I am not a posthumanist; I am who I become with companion species, who and which make a mess out of categories in the making of kin and kind. (2008: 19; emphasis original)

What this emphasizes is a relational approach that would emphasize the fact that encounters take place between particular individual humans and animals in everyday contexts (Birke et al. 2004; Haraway 2008). Such encounters, in turn, generate transformative effects and lead to new identities where participants “become with” each other (see Haraway 2008: 4; cf. Barad 2003). To use the words of Jacques of Derrida, encounters with animal others are constitutive of identity, since without them there is no “I”: “‘I am inasmuch as I am *after* [*après*] the animal’ or ‘I am inasmuch as I am *alongside* [*auprès*] the animal’” (2002, 379). Matthew Calarco underlines the fact that such encounters are “proto-ethical”:

I affirm, or say “yes,” to the Other before I can negate or disavow the Other’s impact. The Other leaves a trace of the shock of encounter within me, and how I respond to that trace [...] constitutes ethics, properly speaking. (2008: 126)

The consequences of such a position for research have been outlined by Susan McHugh and Garry Marvin (2014: 2), who argue that human–animal studies approach the interaction between human and non-human animals as a joint project where the relationship between humans and animals is particularly important. This idea serves as the backbone of this volume. While my analyses focus on texts written by humans, their focus on human–animal encounters makes it possible to identify and discuss the interaction between humans and horses where both participants are affected by the encounter. According to Susan McHugh, this may be seen particularly well in literature since in her view the role of animals in close cross-species relationships is not to be a “supplement to human subject forms” but rather to function “as actors joining us in continuously shaping [...] a range of other narrative forms” and new social sensibilities (2011: 3). For McHugh (2011: 3–5), such narratives exceed the conventional literary focus on human individuality, seen in “intersubjective narratives” such as those telling of guide-dogs and their users, and in “intercorporeal narratives” where conventional species boundaries are problematized as a response to the new sensibilities that characterize cross-species relationships, e.g., in queer life writing or in narratives telling transforming stories of meat animals such as the Australian film *Babe* (1995).

In this volume the human–horse encounter is understood as a form of interaction and becoming (cf. Davis and Maurstad 2016), i.e., as a site for the formation of new identities, as is testified in the texts studied. As a sign of this, the emphasis of the study is on these encounters and the meanings and identifications they generate. The joint construction of subjectivity and identity—if not of entire being as Haraway (2008) would suggest—in human–animal relationships is also a means of challenging anthropocentricity and underlines the potential of animal encounters. What my readings emphasize are questions of affect: in my case studies I explore responses to animals and the ways in which the texts narrate the often strong emotional bond presented in narratives of cross-species companionship, ranging from joy and shared becomings to loss and nostalgia. The concept of affect is understood in the wide sense proposed by Sara Ahmed (2010): it is an experience where the other affects us in ways that cannot be really comprehended through language. In late modern societies, as sociologists such as Adrian Franklin (1999) have suggested, companion animals provide moments of emotional fulfilment and offer relief. Since human–animal relationships are mutual and dialogic, both participants are affected in them, which, again, emphasizes relationality, which is also evident in the case studies. Horses, in particular, are a special case since the bond is both bodily and emotional: riders are constantly in contact with their horses and feel their closeness. To quote Maurstad, Davis, and Cowes, “horses are [...] body mates to many humans, and the relationship is one that affects both parties” (2013: 322).

While the thematic focus of the analyses is on affect and experience, human–horse relationality and interaction, the readings show that the encounters are informed culturally and politically. Rather than focusing merely on the experiencing subject dyad, I seek to contextualize the representation of affect present in encounters in issues of more political and cultural nature. Animal texts are more than reflections on ethics or relationships but they carve out particular ways of thinking about animals and locating them in particular discursive formations. A similar concern has been expressed by Donna Landry in her study of the cultural transformations that the import of foreign Arab horses to early modern Britain generated. Following Garry Marvin, she claims that there is a strong

need to interrogate the significance of the various “social, cultural, economic, political and environmental contexts” that gave shape to particular relationships between humans and animals, and to particular representations of animals, in specific times and places. (2009: 13)

Horses, like other animals when encountered in literary cultural texts, gain their meaning contextually and cannot be approached as transhistorical symbols or exemplars of mythical animals (see Nyman 2003). Following this view, my analyses will explore human–horse encounters in their culturally and historically specific contexts. The following section will present an overview of selected earlier research dealing with human–horse relations and representation of horses.

Context II: Studies of Horses: Culture and Literature

In previous scholarly work on humans and horses, historical, anthropological, and sociological studies dominate. The pre-history of the horse as well as the historical development of the human–horse relationship since the domestication of the horse ca. 6,000 years ago has been well researched, as have also the socio-cultural transformations that horses and their use for military and trade purposes have generated both locally and especially globally (see Kelekna 2009; Walker 2008). What is important in the horse's contribution to the making of the world is its double role as a war horse and as a work horse in transportation and farming, contributing to the formation of civilization (Kelekna 2009: 2). Horses, as historical and anthropological research has shown, have played a central role in the mobility of nomadic peoples from Asia towards Europe, as well as spreading European values to the Americas and Southern Africa through colonization (Kelekna 2009). In so doing, however, the horse has also been appropriated by indigenous cultures, a process that has created new societies, “horse nations” (Mitchell 2015: 4), where the way of life has centred upon the horse. Because of its important role in premodern cultures, the role and significant symbolic value of the horse has been studied with reference to a wide variety of topics and culture, for instance in ancient Greece (Korhonen 2016), medieval Christian iconography (Škrobonja et al. 2010), and early modern Dutch painting (Turnbull 2010). In the modernizing West, horses played a major part in the making and life of urban metropolises in particular, as horses were the prime means of transportation. Referring to the multiple roles of horses and their great number, historians Clay McShane and Joel A. Tarr suggest that “the nineteenth-century city” was “the climax of human exploitation of horse power” (2007: 1).

In recent years, several studies have focused on human–horse relationships in culture and society from diverse angles that have increased our awareness of the multiplicity of encounters at several levels, from individual encounters with particular animals to more general encounters with animals through sport and entertainment. Topics dealt with include,

but are not limited to, the culture of thoroughbred racing in Newmarket, Britain (Cassidy 2002), econationalist discourses and national horse breeds (Nyman and Schuurman 2014), sport (Butler 2013; Smith 2014; Thompson and Birke 2014), values of horse traders (Schuurman 2014), horses and national imaginings (Dalke 2009; Leinonen 2012; Schuurman and Nyman 2014; Schuurman 2017b), theatrical and circus horses (Tait 2015; Marra 2015), horse–rider relationships (Nosworthy 2013; Maurstad, Davis, and Dean 2016), human–horse interaction (Birke 2017; Birke and Hockenull 2016; Hockenull and Birke 2015; Maurstad, Davis, and Cowles 2013; Schuurman and Franklin 2015), and equestrian leisure and activities (Dashper 2017). A recent collection focusing on human–horse encounters is Davis and Maurstad (2016), addressing issues ranging from the symbolic values of horses to human–horse communication. This list of current academic works testifies to a recent interest in cultural equine research as well as showing new potential for interdisciplinary study.

The study of the literary representation of horses remains, however, slightly less developed, although several relevant studies have been published in recent years. While the focus of Elaine Walker's *Horse* (2008) is on the general cultural role and representation of horses throughout history, it occasionally comments on horses in literature. While most published work on horse representation consists of either articles or chapters in monographs, often with a focus on a particular writer or a text, some works with a wider scope have also appeared in recent years. The focus is often on the early modern period and the eighteenth century. Recent significant work includes Kevin De Ornellas's *The Horse in Early Modern English Culture: Bridled, Curbed, and Tamed* (2014). According to de Ornellas (2014: ix-xx), the period's literature uses the horse as a trope in different social and cultural contexts where it receives diverse meanings: starving horses indicate a starving human population, and the silence of horses is akin to women's lack of voice. The presence of horses, however, is indicative of the possibility of transcending and problematizing established identities. Early modern horse culture has also been explored in some anthologies (see Raber and Tucker 2005; Edwards 2007).

Other relevant work on earlier periods includes Donna Landry's *Noble Brutes: How Eastern Horses Transformed English Culture* (2009), a study that examines the ways in which horses imported from Turkey and the Middle East since the 1650s have transformed English horse culture. Arguing for a transnational and cross-cultural understanding of the formation of English horse culture, Landry (2009) shows how allegedly English riding practices are based on Eastern models and are thus instances of cultural hybridity rather than native-born. Using a variety of archival,

visual, and literary sources, the study reveals how the exotic horses are culturally appropriated and turn into English thoroughbreds. Landry also suggests that Jonathan Swift's noble, horse-like figures, the Houyhnhnms described in *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), are based on current views telling of the virtues of Eastern horses:

Their political virtues of honesty and communitarian ideals [...] are accompanied with domestic virtues of the sort that were simultaneously attributed to the horses themselves and to kindly care and attention they received from their Eastern grooms and owners. (2009: 132)

For Landry, the transformation of English horse culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a process of transculturation where mainly Ottoman values and practices enter England and are discursively made to appear as English.

Monica Mattfeld's recent *Becoming Centaur: Eighteenth-Century Masculinity and English Horsemanship* (2017) focuses on horsemanship and eighteenth-century masculinity through literary texts and theatrical performances. Combining performance studies and human-animal studies in the context of eighteenth-century British equestrian culture, Mattfeld (2017) analyses such issues as horsemanship manuals and equine performances at Astley's Amphitheatre—the first circus—to show how masculine identities are constructed in the period. Basing her study on a performative conception of identity, Mattfeld argues that these performances generate both gender and species identities that are in constant flux:

through the performance of riding, the rider and horse become something more than either; they make visible the human-animal as a hybrid, more-than-singular, transspecies being. (2017: 9)

Other major publications on horses in literature include Victorianist Gina M. Dorré's book *Victorian Fiction and the Cult of the Horse* (2006), a study that explores the representation of the horse as a cultural icon in nineteenth-century novels by Charles Dickens, Elizabeth Braddon, Anna Sewell, and George Moore. Writing from a feminist point of view, Dorré (2006: 10) underlines the association of the horse with the masculinist and often patriarchal values of the social elite in the period but also claims that several representations of horses define them as women. In the Victorian mind, Dorré (2006: 11–12) writes, to construct horses as women tells of a dangerous animality to be suppressed—in Dorré's view Victorian horse representations need to be analysed as they open up the period's "fantasies, fears, and cultural imperatives" (2006: 18). The late nineteenth century, as

Susan McHugh (2011: 89) mentions, appears to be a period when the symbolic role of the horse transforms and they are linked with political concerns such as class, slavery, and rape, as seen in Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877) (see Ferguson 1994; Dorré 2006; Nyman 2016). Writing of the novels by George Eliot, Thomas Hardy, and Elizabeth Gaskell, Elsie Mitchell pays attention to the ways in which "men newly enriched by the commercial wealth" ride fine horses and "display a potential to dominate in relation to sexually magnetic women and their ability to ride and control high-spirited horses" (2007: 145). Rather than mere symbols, horses are linked with issues of social and sexual power.

Other horse-focused research where gender plays a particularly strong role has been presented by Jane Tompkins (1992) on the Western and Susan McHugh on narratives dealing with girl jockeys. Tompkins's *West of Everything: The Inner Life of Westerns* (1992: 92) explores the role of the horse mythology in Westerns, reminding the reader that its appearance in late nineteenth-century dime novels and early Western cinema occurs simultaneously with its gradual disappearance from everyday life in the period, so horses link readers and film audiences with nature. While close human-horse relationships are present in many Westerns, seen for instance in the relationship between The Lone Ranger and his Silver (see Tompkins 1992: 89), for Tompkins the role of the horse appears to be subservient to the promoted ideal of cowboy masculinity where emotions are suppressed:

[The cowboy's] impassivity, his hyperbolically reductive language ("nope," "yup"), the stillness of his body, his studied nonreaction to provocation, his poker face—these are the external signs of the ruthless suppression of feeling that marks him as "strong." The continual control he exercises over himself emotionally prepares us and him for the monumental self-discipline he will have to exert in the climactic ordeal, which will subject his body to prolonged physical suffering. The abuse of horses is part of a sadomasochistic impulse central to Westerns which aims at the successful domination of the emotions, of the fleshly mortal part of the self, and of the material world outside the body. (1992: 107)

As horses are submitted to masculine mastery, so is nature to culture and the feminine to the masculine, connecting horse representation with the process of imagining masculine identities in the West. McHugh's chapter "Velvet Revolutions" in her recent *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* (2011) explores the representation of the relationships between girls and horses in narratives telling of girls as jockeys, such as Enid Bagnold's novel *National Velvet, or The Slaughter's Daughter* (1935) and its acclaimed 1963 film version. Seeking to counter conventional views

of girl–horse stories as forms of sublimated adolescent sexuality, through *National Velvet* McHugh (2011: 81–82) traces an alternative historical development where the literary representation of female jockeys in a male-dominated field of sport contributes to its changing practices and discourses, i.e., increased possibilities for women. Further, McHugh (2011: 94–95) links the emergence of these close cross-species relationships in the narratives of women and horses with the possibility of challenging heteronormative expectations and expected patterns of behaviour.

This review has sought to show that there is an emerging tradition exploring horses in literary and cultural narratives, although the number of books devoted to their representation remains limited. It should be mentioned that a good number of essays and book chapters on equine images in works by individual writers with a keen interest in have been published over the years, although they are not often framed in the discourse and concepts of human–animal studies (see, e.g., Michaels [1978] on D.H. Lawrence, and Sanborn [2006] on Cormac McCarthy). The potential of a dialogical and relational approach to the representation of human–horse relationships is immense. To achieve this aim, this book problematizes established understandings of relationships that transgress species boundaries and reads literary texts in the historical and ideological contexts of concerns such as gender and nation. In other words, the human–animal relationship as imagined in the texts under study is shown to have been formed through diverse encounters and life in shared worlds.

Organization of the Book

The organization of the book into two parts sees them as complementary and the division is generic: while Part I explores life writing, in Part II the focus is on fiction. The individual case studies in both parts open up different perspectives on the topic and develop the general thematic in ways that reveal the potential of studying horse narratives in different cultural and historical contexts. As narratives of human–animal encounters, the texts studied are embedded in affect and the subject’s experience; as culturally constructed, they also reproduce and resist ideologies of gender and nation. In this volume, both aspects are present and the texts are analysed within discursive and theoretical frameworks that are sensitive to the individual thematics of each text.

Part I: Autobiography

The first part of the volume consists of three case studies focusing on human–horse encounters in three contemporary US auto/biographical narratives, by Susan Richards, Rupert Isaacson, and Buck Brannaman. As my readings of these narratives will reveal, the strong emotional power attached to human–horse relationships in texts such as Susan Richards’s autobiographical narrative is at the same time political and also reconstructs the narrator’s identity in the contexts of gender, trauma, and recovery. In a similar vein, the two other chapters contextualize their primary source in similar cultural issues.

The first chapter focuses on Susan Richards’s *Chosen by a Horse: How a Broken Horse Fixed a Broken Heart* (2006), a popular book that has been followed with two sequels. This chapter draws on the insight provided by the affective turn to examine the relationship between humans and animals at the level of a particular human–animal encounter, a horse and her human caregiver. By examining Richards’s recent memoir in the framework of current theorizations of affect, the chapter shows how human–animal studies can address life narratives telling of the emotionally loaded relations between humans and non-humans through a discussion of the role of companion animals in late modernity (see Franklin 1999). In examining the particular characteristics of this close bond, this chapter focuses on the role of the animal in autobiographical writing where a genre where the stories of “significant others” contribute to the narrator’s “self-formation” (Smith and Watson 2001: 65). In my discussion of the importance of companion animals in the narrator’s life, I will pay particular attention to their affective representation. Richards’s *Chosen by a Horse: How a Broken Horse Fixed a Broken Heart* is a multi-faceted example of the current tendency to weaving thee into a pet memoir and performs thus what McHugh finds central to the genre: it “negotiate[s] a politics of intimate spheres” (2011: 121). While its explicit focus is on its narrator’s relationship with her new animal companion, the mare Lay Me Down, it contextualizes the relationship in her personal history and the discourse of trauma. The human–horse relationship depicted in Richard’s memoir emerges as one that is intricately linked with her changing identity. By reading *Chosen by a Horse* in the context of affect theory, the chapter shows that its emotional representation of the bond between humans and horses is not a mere marker of the increasingly individualized and emotional relationship between humans and animals characterizing late modern culture. Rather, I will contend that this relationship, represented by the use of a discourse of healing and self-regeneration, seeks to reconstruct the traumatized subject and negotiate her identity. As I will also suggest, the affective representation of the horse and

its significance to the self-transformation of the traumatized autobiographical narrator is also part of the therapeutic discourse of contemporary culture in the United States.

The second chapter in this part examines Rupert Isaacson's travel memoir *Horse Boy: A Memoir of Healing* (2009), telling of the author's ride through Mongolia with his autistic son and a film crew. The text combines the discourse of affect with a reconstructed mode of human-animal relationships emerging from New Age discourses and the alleged closeness to nature characterizing indigenous peoples. The memoir combines the conventions of the travelogue with animal-focused writing. Earlier scholarship on animals in travel writing has noticed their role as objects in colonial discourse and addressed alternative ways of representing animals in the contexts of animal protection, ecocide, and transforming human-animal relations (see Nyman 2014). Rupert Isaacson's bestselling travel narrative seeks to connect its human and non-human participants in order to suggest that culture and nature are not as separate as suggested in mainstream Western thinking. Portraying the narrator's quest on horseback to Mongolia and Siberia in order to find help for his autistic son Rowan, *The Horse Boy* brings to the fore issues of nature, human-animal relations, and indigenous knowledge and defines them as ways of generating healing and community. Owing to the importance of equines in the narrative, I will propose a reading that examines its representation of human-horse relations as a means to reconstruct the traumatized self. This chapter suggests that Isaacson's text, with its emphasis on shamans and indigenous knowledge as providers of healing, is linked with the spiritualistic discourses of the New Age movement but places them in a holistic framework with the aim of questioning conventional Western subjectivity and its definition. As a sign of this, the memoir's vision of the human-animal bond, allegedly stronger in non-Western cultures and capable of bridging the gap between humans and their environment, emerges as an example of the text's critique of the conventional dichotomies of Western thinking, science, and medicine. By claiming that the crossing into Mongolia restores what modernity has suppressed, especially such issues as wholeness and belonging, the book also hints at the significance of its second story, its narrator's attempt to come to terms with the crisis generated by his son's disability and his own need to voice his predicament.

Chapter Three offers a critical analysis of the politics of the method of "natural horsemanship" as presented in the work of the noted US horse trainer and "horse whisperer" Buck Brannaman, who has organized educational clinics for horse owners in his distinguishable manner with the aim of "helping horses with people problems" since the 1980s. Known for

his collaboration with Robert Redford on the Hollywood film *The Horse Whisperer*, Brannaman is a debated figure because of his original methods and views. In a discussion of Brannaman's auto/biography *The Faraway Horses: The Adventures and Wisdom of an American Horse Whisperer* (2005) and Cindy Meehl's documentary film *Buck* (2012), the chapter will locate the textual representations of and by Brannaman in the context of memory and its politics. To provide a background for Brannaman's project, the first part of the chapter contextualizes Brannaman's approach in recent studies of the doctrine of natural horsemanship (NH), a new and popular trend that has contributed to the transformation of human–horse relationships since the 1990s in particular, and addresses its relationship to the cowboy figure, one example of collective memory in the United States. The analysis will show the ways in which the Brannaman texts selectively draw on the cultural memory of the US West and national ideologies to promote a discourse of cultural criticism aiming to solve serious problems facing the way of life in the United States today. In so doing, the Brannaman texts are argued to present a version of horsemanship that translates the mythology of the US West into the contemporary and activates national memories of the US West as a rejuvenating and nationally significant landscape and a site of memory. As a part of this, their human–horse relationships are recast as supporting the formation of masculinized US identities, showing the power of conventional gender politics and hegemonic national identity. As a further example of its cultural significance, and what Meehl's film in particular underlines, it will be shown that Brannaman's projected way of life can be read in the context of trust and its role in modern society as discussed by sociologist Anthony Giddens. By foregrounding the notions of trust and discipline, Brannaman's project emerges as a politically charged cultural narrative whose discourse contributes to ongoing debates concerning the United States and its identity.

Part II: Fiction

The second part of the book explores fictional representations of horses in two Anglophone novels by the contemporary, recently deceased Australian writer Gillian Mears, the widely read US novelist Jane Smiley, and in fanfiction written by the fans of the 1970s British television series *Follyfoot* telling of life and events in a farm caring for old and abused horses.

The first chapter in this part analyses Gillian Mears's well-received novel *Foal's Bread* (2011), a serious examination of human–horse relationships in early- to mid-twentieth-century rural Australia. Published 16 years after the publication of Mears's previous novel, a silence partially

resulting from a serious illness, *Foal's Bread* explores such issues as trauma and memory, family and community, and the relationship between humans, animals, and nature through the Nancarrow family, renowned nationally for their skilled high-jumping performances. In so doing, human–animal relations are placed in the postcolonial and Australian context with particular attention to land and animals, disability, and sexuality. As my reading of Mears's novel shows, *Foal's Bread* writes against conventional colonialist mythologies of Australian identity that tend to promote gendered mastery over nature. By problematizing naturalized ways of telling stories of the relationship between humans and land and of humans and horses, *Foal's Bread* deconstructs the anthropocentric and hierarchical world view promoted in the discourses of modernity and colonialism. In so doing it underlines the entanglement of humans, animals, and their shared natural world and can be seen to be in dialogue with the tradition of the pastoral. While at one level a narrative of rural life and landscape, *Foal's Bread* is not an optimistic or harmonious pastoral but a text that challenges the generic expectations with its thematic involving violence, abuse, and anger, as various members of the family appear to be haunted with the past. Since the optimism characterizing the world of the pastoral is countered in Noah Nancarrow's difficulties in making the farm her home because of the hard realities of farming and the racial and gendered violence of the period's rural Australia, the novel can be read as a postcolonial pastoral that displays an ironic attitude towards the idealized fantasies of rural life promoted in traditional pastorals. As I will show, the novel's critique of such models is intrinsically linked with a view demanding a reassessment of the relationship between humans and nature, or to use the words of Huggan and Tiffin, "a re-imagining and reconfiguration of the human place in nature" (2010: 6). The reading presented in the chapter emphasizes the close relationships between humans, horses, and land.

In the second chapter of Part II my focus is on contemporary popular and creative responses to a 1970s cult television series. The television series *Follyfoot*, highly popular at the time, is based on the works of the writer Monica Dickens telling of life at the Follyfoot Home for the Rest of Horses, a farm dedicated to caring for old and abused horses. While the series is an unlikely object of fandom in a world where pop idols and fantasy heroes are more common sources of fanfiction, a great deal of fanfiction has been written and published on the website *follyfootforum.org* containing extensive discussions of the series, its events and locations, as well as a remarkable number of fanfiction, narratives written by fans which revisit the series and provide fictional narratives of its events, characters, their relationships, and later life. In this chapter I aim to address the central

concerns of *Follyfoot* fanfiction with particular reference to their representation of affect. In the first part of the analysis I will show that these contemporary stories written by the fans of the series deploy a wide range of generic features associated with fanfiction and provide alternative meanings to the series, showing their active participation. The second part of the analysis will address the meanings of these stories in their cultural contexts: through a discussion of their representations of romance, horses, and nation, I will suggest that *Follyfoot* fanfiction displays nostalgic and reactionary tendencies and is thus less innovative thematically than formally. Its nostalgia, to use Svetlana Boym's (2001) term is "restorative" as it aims to yearn for a lost time in one's childhood. As a result, fanfiction appears to be a more historically, ideologically, and contextually defined literary field than its often celebratory scholarship tends to contend.

The final chapter of this part addresses the role of the animal in Jane Smiley's *Horse Heaven* (2000), an ambitious novel with multiple story lines and a large gallery of human and non-human characters. Set in the world of contemporary US thoroughbred horse racing and rooted in its author's long personal involvement in horse culture, *Horse Heaven* attempts to represent no less than the entirety of US horse culture with its trainers and jockeys, small owners and businessmen, gamblers and animal communicators. In so doing, Smiley's novel tells stories of humans and their relationships with individual horses such as the aged and abused race horse Mr. T. and the intelligent racer Justa Bob. Moving between various important locations of US horse racing from Kentucky to California, *Horse Heaven* presents a series of what I call *horsescapes*, spaces where horses and humans are involved in the definition of human-animal relations. Smiley's novel thereby promotes a new, relational understanding of the role of the horse in US culture. Rather than mere objects to be trained and ridden, the horses of *Horse Heaven* are, this chapter suggests, involved in an equine remapping of the nations; they participate in a critique of the individualist and anthropocentric ideologies of the United States, and play a role in negotiating US identities because of their national and transnational location. By showing that the horse is present in all these processes, *Horse Heaven* both challenges conventional hierarchies and discourses marginalizing the role of non-humans in US culture and history and also promotes a new way of understanding human-horse relationships as a means of constructing new, jointly formed identities through what Donna Haraway calls the process of *becoming with* the non-human (2008: 35-36), in which humans and other animals achieve a kind of composite identity that cuts across the species boundary. As Smiley provides her equine subjects with agency and individual stories, they are no longer confined to

the margins of Western modernity but challenge its hierarchies. As the chapter shows, *Horse Heaven* proposes is that its non-human animals are inseparable from Americanness, and that encounters with animals may transform conventional ideas of human as well as non-human identities in a shared world.

PART I:

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVES

