FEMINIST ENCOUNTERS
A JOURNAL
OF CRITICAL STUDIES
IN CULTURE AND POLITICS

Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics, 8(1), 13
ISSN: 2468-4414

lectito

Shared Skin: The Slow Intimacy of Horse and Rider

Sandra Swart [1*]

Published: March 1, 2024

ABSTRACT

This essay explores the co-constructed sensory experiences between two species over time, offering a deeper understanding both of the multi-sensory nature and different scales of inter-species intimacy. A five millennia long intimate sensory conversation between humans and horses was integral to hunting, domesticating, taming, training, sacrificing, harnessing and – eventually – riding the once-wild horses of the steppeland. Domesticating the horse may be seen as slow intimacy and taming as faster intimacy. Horses have evolved to be more empathetic *to us* than most animals, including most domesticated animals, because of the close reading of our intentionality they have needed to develop since domestication. The historian's window into past sensory experiences is usually mediated by language. *But, this essay asks, what if it does not have to be?* It shows how a feminist interspecies historian learns by listening, watching, touching and being with the subject. Feminist thinking can help challenge stereotyping by thinking about the intimacy at the heart of horse-human relationships.

Keywords: horse, intimacy, taming, domestication, sensory, affective, animal history

There is no secret so close as that between a rider and his horse. (Robert Smith Surtees)

No one can teach riding so well as a horse. (C. S. Lewis, *The Horse and His Boy*)

INTRODUCTION

Domesticating, taming and riding are all slow intimacies in action. A long and close sensory negotiation between human and horse was necessary in the making of the historical horse-human dyad. It was integral to first hunting, then domesticating, taming, training, milking, eating, sacrificing, harnessing and – eventually – riding the once-wild horses of the Eurasian steppeland. This slow intimacy of a relationship older than five millennia created a shared embodied conversation. Our two species have become enmeshed in an array of affiliations: a continuum from oppression to collaboration, to (an admittedly uneven) mutualism and partnership. Arguably, horses have evolved in the last few millennia to be more empathetic *to us* than most animals are, including most domesticated animals, because of the close reading of our intentionality they have needed to develop since domestication. We imposed 'anthropogenic selection' (as opposed to 'natural selection') on horses, breeding those who appeared tameable and trainable. But those two traits can be described another way: we selected for horses who were *able to survive intimacy with our species*.

All this brings us to rethink how we relate to horses, especially in terms of feminist thinking from an historical perspective. As Corbin contended, the historian's gateway into past sensory experiences is usually mediated by language. *But what if it does not have to be?* This essay shows how a feminist interspecies historian learns by listening, watching, touching and being with the subject. The exchange between the bodies of the horse and human: the kinetic methodology is part of zooethnography, riding a strange horse and in a strange place, learning new languages of the body from horses in different contexts helps us glimpse their histories with humans to help us understand our species' long-entangled and gendered pasts. This essay explores how we may foreground the sense long considered the least worthy of attention: *touch*. It draws on reading of touch as the 'double sensation' – because to touch is to be touched. Learning to ride and learning to be ridden involve kinaesthetic perception, to create a

[1] *Stellenbosch University*, SOUTH AFRICA
***Corresponding Author:** sss@sun.ac.za

shared multi-species culture in which both bodies can be in intimacy with one another. The riding experience creates a new tactile frontier – the shared skin.

Touch is the neglected sense.[1] But some historians have started (Das, 2005). The history of touch has drawn 'the closest engagement with questions about gender out of all the senses' and provides 'some good examples of the relationship between power and sensory proscription' (Tullett, 2021: 816). Tentative new histories reveal that touch has always been political, embedded in power hierarchies of who could be touched by whom and how (Gowing, 2003). Such sensory history exists within the broader framework of interdisciplinary sensory studies, which delves into how humans perceive and experience the world through their senses.[2] This field raises fresh methodological demands and challenges one to both locate and interpret sensory experiences from old and new historical archives. Historians are currently engaging with the potential of attending to the senses as part of decolonising historical archives and methods. Such decolonisation involves challenging and dismantling the patriarchal, Eurocentric biases that have often dominated historical narratives. By paying attention to sensory experiences, historians can adopt a more inclusive and diverse approach to interpreting the past, ensuring that multiple perspectives are acknowledged – crossing frontiers in the gendered and species order. The archive, while a valuable resource, may not fully capture the richness of sensory experiences, leading to the need for alternative approaches, such as zooethnography, to understand the sensory past. I want to argue for the horse and human body and shared kinaesthetic experience as a new kind of archive – a repository of shared inter-species communication.

IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE HERD

One is not born, but rather becomes, a horse.[3] Out of all the domesticated animals, horses are perhaps the only creatures born too wild for us: they need to be remade with each generation. Each foal must be tamed. Each filly must be trained. Each mare must obey. Each step involves inter-species intimacy, both slow and fast. To understand this, my essay embraces the most famous feminist sentence ever written, Simone de Beauvoir's '*On ne naît pas femme: on le devient'* and refashions it as '*On ne naît pas jument: on le devient*.' (De Beauvoir, [1949] 1956: 273). Translated into English: one is not born but rather becomes woman. De Beauvoir (1908–1986) wrote this line in her 1949 classic *The Second Sex.*[4] She meant that 'woman' is a construct: not born, but determined, and 'womanhood' is learned through socialisation and is not 'natural.'[5] Equally, one is certainly born an equine. Yet it takes an enduring process to render one a 'horse'. Variously 'taming', 'breaking', 'bringing on', 'educating', 'training', or 'gentling' is required to make a horse an acceptable member of the horse-human herd. These are efforts predicated on a range of relationships from total domination to attempts at partnership. In De Beauvoir we hear the echoes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concern for the constraint of individual freedom, how we are born free but everywhere we are in chains (Rousseau, 1762, 1953). In a way, each horse is born a paradox. They are ambulatory ambiguities, cantering contradictions. Wild and tame. Vulnerable and self-sufficient; ready and unready; made and unmade. We love them for their wildness, then we bind them in leather and chains. So horses are born free, but are everywhere in reins.

PET(ER) PAN CREATURES? THE ANIMALS THAT REFUSED TO GROW UP

It was not always so. During the Pleistocene era, wild equids proliferated in Asia, the Americas and Africa. In the modern world, however, only a few of these species survive: the wild ass, Kiang, zebra and, perhaps, the *takhi.*[6] Most of these are endangered, but horses as a species flourish, with probably as many as 60 million globally, most living closely with people and some living feral as mustangs, brumbies and so on. Although they thrive as a species, individually they are vulnerable creatures, prone to injury, inclined to overheating and overeating, and much given to perishing in a variety of bewildering ways. They are easily our most susceptible domesticated animal.

[1] This essay draws from Swart (2021) and, especially in this section, from Swart (2022).

[2] Historians first examined the shifting sensory worlds of the past from the early twentieth century. From early forbears (like Freud) commenting on the sensory in society, we may trace the lineage to post-structural feminism on the historical association between the maternal, patriarchal and the sensory. For gendered sensory history, see Harvey (2003).

[3] To misquote Simone De Beauvoir.

[4] Simone De Beauvoir lives on as a Standardbred New Zealand-born mare of the same name, currently racing with a few wins to her credit.

[5] In contrast, the term female is intended to describe a stable set of natural physical facts (a presumption that is increasingly challenged by the existence of more fluidity and a continuum of chromosomal variations and psycho-social identities).

[6] *Takhi* or Przewalski's horse no longer exists in a pure state, having been diluted with the genes of our horses or donkeys. The wild horses of the Americas and brumbies of Australia, too, are really feral escapees.

Horsestorians can only shake their heads in wonder at how horses, who have been instruments of vast socio-political and economic change in human society, can themselves die from a trivial shift in routine or food. As their breathing and eating systems merge, they cannot vomit, so even simple indigestion can mean death. Any disruption to normality compromises their immune system. Once an old desert farmer, gesturing at his herds with his pipe in wry despair, said to me, 'All of God's creatures are perfect. But the Big Man in the sky might want to take another run at inventing the horse'.

The old man was right and wrong. Horses are riddled with design flaws, but blaming a deity or even the invisible hand of evolution is quite wrong. Evolution produced equids but we invented modern horses by domesticating them at least five millennia ago on the steppelands: this invention reflects the flaws of its creator. Our invisible and visible hands are evident in the three processes in our longstanding relationship: domestication, taming and riding. Of course, this trifecta of processes are very different things. But all are integral to the construction of horses – their biologies and cultures, nature and nurture, bodies and minds, but very, very different in terms of scale. Essentially, a rogue primate took a herbivore and made it something new (Swart, 2010). And then this strange mix-matched pair together changed the face of the world. They changed the land itself and the landscape of power. Their relationship pivoted on domesticating and taming and riding.

Domestication meant the very slow intimacy of five thousand years of modifying the horse's body and their temperament through anthropogenic artificial selection. At the end of the Pleistocene era, rapid climatic changes that disrupted habitats and food supplies favoured animals that were the animal equivalent of 'weeds': opportunistic, adaptive generalists. The rapidly changing environment created a selective pressure that favoured neoteny (the retention of juvenile traits into adulthood for horses: physically, longer-legged; and behaviourally, more curious, more controllable). Evolution favoured some animals with juvenile ('Peter Pan') traits that made them appealing to *Homo sapiens*. Horse domestication probably depended on chance genetic changes that would have predisposed some horses to breed in captivity. Humans then selected horses displaying neotenic variations because they were more tractable and unafraid of new experiences (and could therefore survive inter-species intimacy). Those animals who became adult enough to breed but remained 'childlike' enough to play and to tolerate us and our strange companion species, carved out a niche for themselves. We helped these forever-young animals succeed by feeding, sheltering and breeding them. Thus, we need to challenge an opening premise in this essay: so-called 'artificial' selection by humans was arguably partly 'natural' or at least permitted by attributes of reduced neophobia in some horses, for example.

With domestication, a kind of perpetual childhood fell upon them: the proportions of our adult horses are more like those of the long-legged, slender-necked foals of the once-wild horse than of their adult ancestors. We have radically altered these creatures over the past millennia, by collapsing their genetic diversity through inbreeding as we moved towards using only a small number of stallions – so that now, almost all horses carry identical, or near identical, Y-chromosomes causing an accretion of harmful mutations in their genomes. This was the 'cost of domestication', leading to congenital disorders, and in some breeds, dangerously fragile legs and hooves. This was the price of the first and 'slowest intimacy' we imposed on this species: domestication.

The cost of faster intimacy – using horses – can be high too. Because we expect so much from horses – because their bodies and ours have to work together, because mutual misunderstanding easily mean injury or death to ourselves, because their job is complicated and changing – equines have to receive an education in 'how to be a horse for humans' *from humans*. We thus tame them to suit our shifting needs. This brings us to the second process of enforcing intimacy: it is 'faster intimacy' and imposed on each individual horse, rather than a species. In other words, a foreign species teaches them at least part of their 'culture': their etiquette, language, and expression. Strangers stamp their own ways upon them. Taming shapes the young foal how to accommodate another, dominant species. Each foal thus re-enacts, in microcosm, the ancient process of domestication.

History has held a certain vision of our equestrian past: horse and man appear as dyad integral to great narratives of times gone by, of the rise of kingdoms and states, of the making and unmaking of nations and empires, of the emergence of politics and war. The conventional narrative is mainly of conquest: dominance over the horse first, then their immediate and obvious use of this instrument of dominance over other humans. We see it in thousands of equestrian statues dating back to sixth-century Greece. These statues are an atomised army, raised high above the ordinary people: kings and generals on their mounts. Great deeds and great steeds. Big Men on Big Horses. Yet taking intimacy and feminist history seriously figuratively topples such statues, dethroning the centrality of war and violence as the only engines of change. Feminist history, like feminism itself, is about choice. This essay adopts the feminist lessons of reclaiming, decentring, layering, rethinking, and incredulity towards meta-narrative (Swart, 2022). It explores the slow intimacy of domestication, of taming and riding. In telling this story, I foreground the women and the mares of the past, and, in this way, offer notes for a future feminist history of horses and humans. I will show you that intimacy is at the heart of this project.

Figure 1. Foaling in love-1 (Source: Sandra Swart)

Figure 2. Rearing baby (Source: Sandra Swart)

TRUE INTIMACY

This intimacy is more than merely academic for me. There is another kind of closeness at work here (on the classic feminist principle of the personal being political). When I bought my young Appaloosa mare, Aztec, I had no idea she carried inside her another horse as yet unborn. Aztec is a gentle, long-legged mare of melancholy loveliness – but her daughter, Voodoo (she arrived here, after all, by the strange alchemy of chance and desire), is a stubby and stout pony of strong opinions. Both mares, both of the same bloodline – but both very different. From delivering her on the night of her birth to now eight years later, raising her has been an education – mainly for me. I realise how much they have both taught about the realities and stereotypes about females of both our species (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**).

Figure 3. Intimacy is reciprocal (Source: Sandra Swart)

WHAT IS INTIMACY?

Intimacy can be confused for romance and fantasy. There are certainly moments of horse ownership that are Instagram intimacy. Airbrushed closeness between woman and horse, our manes flowing in the wind, both liberated by the other to gallop freely from the usual constraints of horse or human herd.[7] But real intimacy is something different. Horses love to browse the urine and faeces of other horses. They are olfactory calling cards, revealing much about the identity of their producer (think of it as peemail). But this is not limited to horses, their humans peer into their horse's dung every day, like Roman Soothsayers staring into the entrails to predict the future of their horse's health. Horse dung tells one so much about the overall health of your charge. That is real intimacy. Moreover, every single day, horses need to have their hooves cleaned and to be groomed. It becomes as natural as breathing to run my hands down her legs, along her back. I open her mouth. I look in her gums, I look in her eyes. I reach between her udders because that is where the ticks cluster. This is all extremely intimate stuff. Sometimes she does it back: I get nibbled as I groom in a mutualistic bonding session (**Figure 3**).

But intimacy is a strange thing. It was because I know Aztec's body so well that I was able to see the first lesions. Tiny, almost-invisible lacerations appeared on her pink fanny – the early stages of skin cancer. It is a not uncommon fate for creatures who evolved far from the African sky: her petal-pink skin of her vulva became riddled with squamous cell carcinoma. A veterinary specialist diagnosed her, but I had to administer the chemotherapy every week. It was an incredibly toxic process. I had to dab the cancerous sores with chemotherapy poison. I once spilled a little bit on my arm that burned right through my skin. It was unbelievably painful. I had to do this to her every week. Remember, that she had no understanding why I suddenly inflicted this agony upon her. Moreover, she is an animal who could kill me with a single kick. Yet she did not once raise a hoof to me over the long weeks of treatment. You will share my joy that Aztec survived cancer, chemo and received a clean bill of health, for now. I remain vigilant – the cancer will return, and I scan her pink skin anxiously every day. This is authentic – not airbrushed – intimacy. *Such intimacy is ugly and beautiful in that ugliness* (**Figure 4**).

THE MARTYRDOM OF SAINT BOY

Now, we will move on to a different kind of ugliness: the *absence* of intimacy. Here we will encounter a very clear illustration of the importance of slow intimacy and the dramatic results of its failure may be seen in horse-human interactions, from the quotidian to the Olympic level. Modern pentathlon, for example, has always included horses. In the sporting arena, that held true too: a feminist history of sport would discuss the inclusion of women in Olympic dressage in 1952, jumping in 1956 and eventing in 1964; and in each of these debuts, at least one woman came home with a medal. At the recent Tokyo Games, in August 2021, one horse called Saint Boy was

[7] Such moments photograph well, but they have ersatz quality – the gaze disrupts the dyad. There is perhaps a posed quality that prohibits truly being in the moment with each other: a porn version, if you will, from the human side.

Figure 4. True intimacy can be ugly (Source: Sandra Swart)

martyred because of the failure to realise the importance of establishing intimacy between horse and rider. In Modern Pentathlon events, the humans and horses only meet each other just before the event starts. (The horses are borrowed locally from private owners or riding schools.) There are selectors that choose suitable horses: these go into a common pool: the competitor then draws a horse, has twenty minutes to ride, with a mere five warmup jumps. Then this dangerous partnership – strangers to each other – go and jump a 1.20 m course. The pairs only have a short warm up, and then the competition begins, whereas in Olympic dressage, eventing and show jumping, the horse and human partners normally train together for years. One cannot just jump on and go as though a horse were a bicycle, and this led to crashing failure to perform. Intimacy – trust, connection, understanding, affiliation – must be established (Wipper, 2000; Hausberger *et al.*, 2008; Krueger, 2008: 195–206). Partnership is not too strong a term, as compatibility coupled to mutual confidence and communication are all vital constituents of the relationship: perhaps we could call it *functional intimacy*.

Lacking intimacy – even 'fast intimacy' – doomed them to failure. His rider could not read him at all. For millions watching the televised broadcast, it was like watching a slow-motion car crash. Horse and rider both seemed to become frustrated and started losing control of the course (Crooks, 2021). To quote *Cool Hand Luke*: What they had was a failure to communicate (Rosenberg, 1967). The horse bucked and seemed reluctant to trot around the course. The rider did not soothe or touch the horse on the neck or withers. Instead, she seemed to stiffen (closing the door to tactile communication) and then burst into tears, repeatedly striking Saint Boy with her crop and using spurs digging into his sides. In exasperation, which illustrates again for us the relationship between intimacy and violence, her coach urged the athlete to really hit Saint Boy and then punched him herself.[8]

Public outrage ensued and the Olympic committee has realised that this was not working and voted to replace horses in this event, because intimacy cannot be built in such a brief moment and, without it, the event becomes dangerous for horse and human.[9] So Modern Pentathlon will replace riding with an obstacle course. Intimacy matters and it takes time.

[8] In fact, there is a link between violence towards animals and intimate partner or domestic violence (Wuerch, 2021).

[9] The German equestrian federation commented: As a professional association for equestrian sports, we adopt a critical view of the riding in the Modern Pentathlon. According to our understanding of equestrianism, *it is the partnership between the rider and the horse that counts* and not to consider the horse as a piece of sports equipment [translated, my emphasis]. Cuckson, 2021.

Time is a factor. As discussed earlier, for most of our closely-shared past, horses were instruments and symbols of power for men. Horsemen were more than men and more than horses: a horseman was a supraspecies creature. The orthodox narrative is of conquest: dominance over the horse followed by the immediate and obvious use of this 'horse power' for dominating other humans. But even in the grand sweep of History, it was intimacy that made it all possible. Horses and humans can survive the intimacy it requires to ride them into battle because of a shared understanding of sensory capacity. Equine brains have evolved sensitive 'touch recognition'. Horses were able to be the partners humans needed because their somatosensory cortex could interpret the signals of these sensitive receptor cells in their skin and convert pressures exerted by the rider's shifting bodily movements to neural impulses that the horse's brain could understand. Moreover, horses adapted to the imposition of human body language because they were already adept at using subtle but learnable body language as their main language with each other (a horse has only to tighten her nostrils or twitch her ear for another to back off). Nuanced signals create a lexicon of intent – people can also learn to read the horse's intentionality. We watch their eyes, ears, nostrils, mouth and tail, we hear their snorts and farts and whinnies and nickers: but we *feel* their muscle tension or even just shifting weight. They are all acts of communication. The conversations pivot on applying touch to various parts of the horse's body: in its crudest form, humans shout and wave their arms and horses move away. At the higher level the conversation is almost invisible to an outsider observer. Dressage rider-horse combinations who have worked together over many years seem to communicate invisibly: both horse and rider are 'whispering' to each other in a conversation based on the intimacy of touch. Shared inter-species synchronicity is made up of slow and fast intimacy: it takes millennia for the evolutionary process of domestication and months or years for the taming and riding. We could call it kinaesthetic empathy (Meyer and Wedelstaedt, 2017). Or we could call it 'intimacy' – slow and fast, ancient and in the moment. It requires an embodied and empathetic dialogue.

In these interspecies pairs, communication is accomplished through the tactile language of shared contact. It is easily misunderstood by the uninitiated of either species. Pressure signals from each animal are sensed and diffused through peripheral nerves leading through each of the two species' spinal cords. These signals are construed in each animal's brain and a learned reaction is then sent back through the spinal cord and nerves: these subtle signals make up interspecies neurobiological conversations. Humans rely on their prefrontal cortex for strategising, but horses have a rather restricted frontal lobe, relying more on memory and sensory feedback. Horses' watchful alertness and humans' ability to hyper-focus to make a stronger, faster combination including the sensory capacities of both creatures. So 'mounting the horse' became an act of dominance over others (Bronowski, 1973: 80).

In the conquest of the Americas, indigenous groups confronted by the horsemen led by Hernando Cortés were said to perceive horse and rider as one and the same: a monstrous chimera in the shape of a mounted Spanish conquistador. The dyad of horse and man was a new creature far greater than the sum of its parts: supra-human and superhuman in one shared skin. Some humans were suddenly lifted high, while literally and figuratively looking down on other humans. A warrior on a horse had the lead over those on foot owing to their increased height and speed. People could suddenly move at an astonishing 30 kilometres per hour.[10] The world became smaller and human control greater.[11] This dominance was gendered. History remembers it in the thousands of equestrian statues all around the globe. These gendered ideals are literally held up above society on pedestals. As Birke and Brandt explain, '[u]sually, it is quite clear that [the horse in an equestrian statue] is a stallion, its very maleness befitting the glory of the man above, and the tales of conquest in their combined story' (Birke and Brandt, 2009: 193). This general point, as it were, is illustrated by the statue of General Winfield Scott, a war hero who served almost five decades from the War of 1812 to the start of the Civil War (Jacob, 1998). The general was known as 'Old Fuss and Feathers' because of his devotion to pomp and pageantry. After his death in 1866, Congress decided to erect a bronze equestrian statue of him in the nation's capital. The sculptor they chose was Henry Kirke Brown. Henry cherished an appetite for authenticity. The family were happy when the sculptor used bronze from the very cannons the general had captured in battle. They were somewhat less delighted when the sculptor refused to slim down the rotund general. But they were plain outraged when he depicted the general astride not a huge stallion but a little mare – just as he had ridden in real life. The general's family begged for a more masculine statue. Eventually, the sculptor – dare we say a trifle defiantly? – affixed a tiny penis to the mare. Yet almost everywhere else, in the rearing rigidity of statues, the maleness of rider and horse is exaggerated priapically.

For millennia, the horse was a labourer, a form of transportation and a weapon. With the development of the engine, horses' roles and socio-historical significance shifted. Now horses are also used to conquer new enemies of humankind, like trauma and ailments, rather than empires. It is the sensitivity of horses to us and ours to them that undergirds initiatives like Equine-Assisted Psychotherapy, Equine-Assisted Learning Therapy (to develop life-skills like self/other-awareness) and Hippotherapy (occupational therapy/physical therapy using horses) (Yorke *et*

[10] The average top speed of a horse is 40 to 48 km/h when carrying a rider. The fastest horses can run up to 70 km/h for short stretches.

[11] This elegant description of the dance between horse and human comes from Jones (2020); also explored and drawn from Swart (2021).

al., 2013; Sánchez *et al.*, 2014). Trauma-focused therapeutic riding helps humans who have survived violence, abuse or abandonment. Most revolve around physical intimacy: for physically-challenged and autistic children: working with horses improves muscle tone, self-control and proprioception. In cases of trauma (for veterans or survivors of domestic violence), the feel-good hormone oxytocin (often dubbed 'the love drug' because of its increase during sex) is released during communication with horses, inducing a restorative effect. When we groom, brush or even touch horses, oxytocin is released and we (and sometimes the horse) are flooded with oxytocin. When we ride, the close bodily contact with another being and the rocking motion simulates being hugged. The movement of the horse and the soothing sensory input it provides can also help calm the amygdala and reduce stress, which is measurable with reduced cortisol coursing through the body. The horses do not seem to suffer stress, and, indeed, sometimes mirror the human effects of lowered cortisol and increased oxytocin in their bodies: a possible reciprocal benefit from the shared intimacy of bodies (Malinowski *et al.*, 2018).

This is recognised in new studies of psychophysiological indicators of emotional responses. Studies show that horses certainly seem to feel more peaceful when people groomed (brushed) them, especially humans they already knew rather than strangers. The sympathovagal balance shifted toward a vagal predominance, which means they were less stressed when pleasurably touched by someone with whom they were familiar (Scopa *et al.*, 2020). These scientific studies are valuable – but many ordinary horsepeople know this too. As cowboy Buck Brannaman (2001: 124) describes it:

> One little wrong move on my part, and [Biff, an untrained colt] would have pawed my head off or kicked me in the belly. But I had to touch him, because that established the vital physical and emotional connection between horse and human. I rubbed him with my hand and with my coiled rope along his neck, rubbing him affectionately, the way horses nuzzle each other out in a pasture and especially the reassuring, maternal way a mare bonds with her foal.

TOUCHING MOMENTS? FLESHING IT OUT

Such intimacy of touch is curiously neglected by scholars. Feminist scholars Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa contend that 'a theory in the flesh' includes corporeal realities and embodied knowledge (Moraga and Anzaldúa, 2015). Despite its being the primary means of communication between rider and horse, there are vanishingly few peer-reviewed scientific studies focusing on this from equitation science: but there are new important works coming from feminist theory, sociology, anthropology and ethnography (Birke and Thompson, 2017; Blokhuis and Lundgren, 2017; Brandt, 2004; Maurstad, Davis and Cowles, 2013). This is a welcome development as the tactile frontier between species is a vital instrument of closer understanding. Horses' skin is their largest bodily organ, just as for us. Like us, the horse prefers a gentle but rhythmical touch and to be massaged (rubbed and stroked) rather than patted. We know that the horse's skin is almost the same as our skin in basic structure and feels pain as we do. So it is shocking that one is permitted to whip the horse in otherwise well-regulated horse sports like racing, show jumping and so on. The whiskers (or the lovely word: '*vibrissae*') around the eyes and muzzle alert the horse to the proximity of other beings and of objects. Through their whiskers and lips, horses gather a tremendous amount of tactile information. It is equally astonishing that it is permissible to cut these off to produce 'prettier' horses for showing.

Touch is integral to a horse's sensory world. A horse can sense a fly land on their body and twitch that specific area of skin. Touch transcends the individual: it helps cement social bonds and patrol behaviour by biting, sniffing, nibbling, nudging, playing, and grooming. Such intimacy is key to emotional well-being and the horse's sense of self within the herd. This sensorium transfers to the act of riding: a sense of touch is important between a rider and the horse. Indeed, it is the key communication tool. Maurice Merleau-Ponty's notion of touch as the 'double sensation' – because to touch is to be touched – is most useful in thinking about horse riding (Merleau-Ponty, 1982). The touch receptors help with proprioception or kinaesthesia: the body's ability to sense movement and place. It is a kind of 'sixth sense' that tells you where your body ends and the world begins. Equine proprioception permits a horse to sense the pressures within her own body and within ours. As she carries you, the horse knows not only where her feet are, but also what your feet, thighs, calves, hands are doing, the pressure of your back and pelvis, the alignment of your torso and which direction your head is facing. Touch is the foundation of the human-horse relationship.

TOUCHY FEELY?

In equestrianism, an attuned and attentive relationship between the horse and rider is vital to ensure communication. This is an effort towards a shared closeness or understanding between bodies. This is described

as having 'feel' and is perhaps most simply defined as possessing an awareness of you own body and that of your horse. Feel (sometimes called 'tact') emerges only over time, when a rider establishes a conversation and connection with their horse that allows them to sense the horse's position at every step, as the horse accepts and responds to the rider's seat, leg, and rein aids through this channel. Beyond the corporeal aspect of this connection, *feel* also entails an emotional bond between the horse and rider. The rider must be attuned and attentive to the horse's needs, the reasons behind those needs, and precisely when to apply the aids (different signals for the horse to change their course of action). One can develop feel but it cannot be learned from a book: it requires an equine teacher. Moreover, in learning, the rider needs to deploy all of their senses – especially touch – and not rely exclusively or even primarily on the visual. As Petitt and Brandt-Off observe, both species must be socialised, or zoocialised, to learn to engage in a shared community of communication where they develop a sense of timing and feel of the others to enable their directed movement together (Petitt and Brandt-Off, 2022). *Feel* is earned. It is only through slow inter-species intimacy that a rider acquires feel.

SADDLED WITH HISTORY?

We may feel intimate, but we are never entirely alone. The horse-human dyad has received much attention, but I argue that we should challenge the very idea of dyad. It really is a multi-species ecosystem. Every romantic 'solitary' gallop when one is 'alone with one's horse' actually carries a legion of fellow travellers: flies, worms, ticks and parasites, flies, and gut biota, which all come along for the ride. Moreover, even when it seems like just horse and rider, we do not ride alone. Behind us on the saddle, skeletal arms around our waists, we carry the unseen passenger of History.

Our horses carry the burden not only of ourselves but of the past. This is gendered by a military and highly masculinised memory of history. An example is the very way most people mount a horse: from the left side. Some assume that horses simply prefer to be worked from the left. So the left is the 'near' side, while the right side is the 'off' side. These terms reinscribe this unbalanced approach, which, in fact, has nothing to do with what horses prefer. Instead, we involuntarily re-enact history every time we ride. We still mount from the left because of swords we no longer carry. It is an historical legacy: most people are right-handed so men carried swords on their left sides so they could easily reach them with their right hands. With a long blade suspended from a rider's left it was impractical, if not impracticable, to mount the horse from the right side, because they would then sit on their swords.[12] Horses' right and left-brain hemispheres do not automatically swop information; so if you train on the left, it feels new on the right. Really, we should be mounting from both sides for the sake of the horse's brain and back. There are risks associated with mounting your horse from the same side every time (Geutjens *et al.*, 2008). It places unnecessary unequal pressure on the horse's withers, resulting in bruising, repetitive wear and tear and pain. Ideally horses should be mounted from both sides on a rotating basis to help equalise the pressure and keep them more balanced. So we actively harm the horse by always mounting from the same side. Is History doing our bodies damage?

GENDER MATTERS?

Historically, gendering the practice of riding may do damage. In other work, I have shown how gender stereotyping imposed on the riders does harm. Ersatz Freudian stereotyping has been deployed to explain the global North's predominantly female equestrian world. Claiming the horse as phallus-substitute and riding as a form of penis envy crudely caricatures and does damage to the human-horse relationship (Swart, 2022). We also harm through gender stereotyping imposed on the horses. Our own cultures' histories shape how we respond to mares. So we see the word 'mare' take on a life of its own, elided with another meaning from *mære*, an Old English term for an evil spirit that was supposed to settle on a sleeper's chest and cause a feeling of suffocation. At other times it meant a bad woman or a 'slut'. The very elision of mare and nightmare entrenches the prejudice in quotidian idiom, meaning a 'frustrating experience' or (in sport) 'a poor performance' – as in 'what a *mare* of a round!' Anti-mare sentiment has varied in a non-linear fashion with shifts in society and historical periods.

When we think 'horse culture', we might think of Scythians, Sauromatae, Saka, and Sarmatians, nomads of Mongolia and Kazakhstan (Borisenko and Hudiakov, 2018), Bedouins (Lange, 2019), Yakuts of Northern Siberia, Boer commandos (Swart, 2003), gauchos, vaqueros, buckaroos (Clayton, Hoy and Underwood, 2001; Slatta, 1991), the urban cowboys of Compton (Rabitsch and Salisbury, 2021), the Blackfoot of the Western Plains, Spanish Riding School of Vienna, we might think of globalised racing (Cassidy, 2007), eventing, dressage, polo, or we might think of tough little pony-mad 'horsey gels' who have to stand on buckets to groom. These cultures are obviously

[12] Napoleon, who was left-handed, was an exception and had to mount from the right.

contoured by prevailing societal norms and concomitantly gendered (as well as classed and raced). But not only *humans* experience being gendered in these cultures: so do horses. Humans ascribe identity to the sexed bodies of equines and treat them differently because of it. Birke and Brandt make the good point that: 'The presence of horses enables a subversion of dominant gender practices particularly at the localized (private) level, while at the same time enables a reinscription of traditional gender ideals at the global (public) level' (Birke and Brandt, 2009: 189). It is significant that almost all equestrian competitions are, in stark contrast to other sports except pistol shooting, open to both women and men on equal playing fields, as the horse (like the gun) makes up for the physical differences between them. That is subversive of the stark gendered order of most competitive sports. Moreover, gendered norms can be disrupted by equestrianism: some women riders, in some contexts, find themselves laying claim to more masculinised identities than non-riders in the same communities (Traeen and Wang, 2006). However, in other ways perceived gender identities are actually fetishised in the horse world.

Prejudices extend not only to female humans but also to the female horses, as noted above. In today's riding world (at least in the West), riders openly declare their preference for geldings over mares. Yet other cultures see the bodies and behaviours of horses differently, proving these are gendered rather than sexed differences. (Among the Bedouin, for example, mares were most highly valued as war horses.) The horse industry abounds with sexist stereotypes. Happily, feminist history alerts us to the dangers of such stereotypes and recent scientific studies are beginning to explode them too. Tentative findings suggest there may be some very minor sex-related differences in behaviour (like geldings will perhaps more readily chew on rugs).[13] But the majority of scientific studies found no significant difference between mares, geldings or stallions in the variables that actually matter in horse-human intimacy: the ability to understand and operationalise that understanding (Wolff and Hausberger, 1995). A significant study found <5% difference in behaviours in total scoring between mares and geldings (Aune *et al.*, 2020). Even when bias is involved, the results were telling: in one study that criticised fillies as more volatile than geldings, the fillies actually achieved the same measurable goals (Duberstein and Gilkeson, 2010). So it might simply have been the (socialised) human eye seeing what our culture encourages it to see: 'hysterical females over-reacting'.

There is a cruel corollary to these stereotypes. Equestrians (both trainers and riders) have historically-inflected prejudices in how they understand their intimacy with horses that is contoured by a gendered understanding of the horse. To put it bluntly: mares suffer misogyny. Overwhelmingly, riders favoured geldings over mares. Disturbing traits repeatedly ascribed to mares include 'touchy', hysterical, dramatic, diva, over-sensitive, bitchy, and bossy. History teaches us that stereotypes do matter. In an important study, Dashper *et al.* surveyed over a thousand riders to ascertain their choice of horse premised exclusively on the sex: selecting either mares, geldings, or stallions for dressage, show-jumping, and trail-riding. Geldings came out on top by an overwhelming majority (valued as trustworthy and dependable), followed by stallions (esteemed for purported magnificence and 'presence'). Mares came out last. This was justified with familiar gender typecasting portraying females as 'moody, flighty, and unpredictable' (Dashper *et al.*, 2018: 673).

Moreover, the ethological the dominance paradigm is still widely applied. Many subscribe to a very simple ethological model, thinking that 'wild' ('feral') herds are led by a 'boss' mare. Thus stigmatised, the so-called 'bossy mare' faces the prospect of having any unwanted conduct misunderstood as a 'hierarchical challenge' to her human trainer and rider (the true boss?) rather than ascribe it (correctly) to fear, pain or confusion (Dashper *et al.*, 2018). The consequences of such bias are significant. Mares might be overlooked or underestimated due to assumptions about their sex (and perceived gender), leading to missed opportunities for them to showcase their potential or, worse, being abandoned as biologically irredeemable. Instead of attributing problems (like squealing or biting when being saddled, kicking out at the aids, and so on) to pain or confusion, there is a strong risk of erroneously connecting them with the sex of the horse. When a gelding, considered a team-player, reliable and laid-back, disobeys a signal, the rider is more likely to think that he has misunderstood and try different ways to establish it with reinforcement. But a mare will not get that second chance. When riders ascribe undesirable behaviours in mares to biological or character flaws, important signs of pain[14] or fear are simply overlooked. This can precipitate punishment rather than a more thoughtful diagnosis of the unwanted behaviour (like an ill-fitting saddle).

Of course, feminism does not reject the biological, but rather seeks to understand its 'interimplication' in the social (Roberts, 2001). Mares are seasonally polyoestrous, so they actively cycle for part of the year, during which time they may urinate or 'wink' their external reproductive organs, and be perceived as more sensitive or bad tempered. Riders may blame a mare's 'cycle' or her hormones making her 'hysterical' rather than searching for underlying discomfort from injury or ill-fitting tack. In another cross-species stereotype: when a stallion shows sexual interest in mares, his 'studdiness' is forgiven or even admired! But a mare in season, showing the signs of squatting, squirting and winking at a passing horse, is often branded (in jocular or more judgemental terms) a

[13] While the study did show that mares and gelding showed minor differences on the ground, they did not under saddle. The mares were slightly more likely to evade capture on the ground.

[14] Studies have found connections between pain (from back or ulcers, for example) and perceived belligerence.

'hussy' or a 'slut' by their owners. This is a dual-edged sword of gender prejudice that cuts both mares and sex-positive women.

Stereotyping shapes perception and therefore shapes human relationships with horses. A trifecta of takeaways come from this: overall, research findings suggest that horse behaviour under saddle is 'not sexually dimorphic'. In other words, it is not affected by whether a horse is a mare or a gelding (Aune *et al.*, 2020). Second, sex-based stereotyping damages the ability of mares to attain their full performance potential as baseless bias misdiagnoses real problems by ascribing these issues to the sex of the horse rather than the personal history of horse and rider, and 'legacies of training and prior learning'. Finally, mares may be more easily given up on, discarded, sold (or even euthanised) because of such culturally-inscribed and historical entrenched beliefs. Gender plays a role in the quality of life of horses, just as it does among humans. It impacts on how they are handled and how their behaviour is interpreted. In short, it affects the kind of intimacies they are permitted.

CONCLUSION: GETTING UNDER THE SKIN?

This essay has explored the co-created sensory experiences between two species over time, offering a deeper understanding of the multi-sensory nature and different scales of inter-species intimacy. Feminist thinking can help challenge stereotyping by thinking about the intimacy at the heart of horse-human relationships. It can demonstrate the simple but powerfully hopeful truth that *if it has changed before it can be changed again* (Swart, 2016). As De Beauvoir ([1949] 1956: 61) once said, echoing Merleau-Ponty '… man is not a natural species; he is a historical idea. Woman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming…'. Horses are also not a natural species. They were a shared historical invention, an idea five millennia in the making – more our idea than theirs – and at times, a terrible idea. De Beauvoir's point was that ideas could change. Horses, like 'women', are not a completed 'reality' but rather a fluid 'becoming', along with us in our soft shared skins.

The bodies of history are remembered in stone and bronze. We saw how statues remember the gendered history of horsemen. But we live in age of toppling statues. One by one, Big Men on Big Horses are unseated and come crashing down, the old paradigms crack, the old gender orders disintegrate, the old histories crumble, and the old heroes fall. Some suggest that when the effigies fall, we simply keep the statues of horses – alone on the plinths. A world of riderless horses… free at last.

REFERENCES

Aune, A., Fenner, K., Wilson, B., Cameron, E., McLean, A. and McGreevy, P. (2020). Reported behavioural differences between geldings and mares challenge sex-driven stereotypes in ridden equine behaviour. *Animals*, 10 (3), 414. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani10030414

Birke, L. and Brandt, K. (2009). Mutual corporeality: Gender and human/horse relationships. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32 (3), 189–197. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2009.05.015

Birke, L., and Thompson, K. (2017). *(Un) stable relations: Horses, humans and social agency*. Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Blokhuis, M. Z. and Lundgren, C. (2017). Riders' perceptions of equestrian communication in sports dressage. *Society & Animals*, 25 (6), 573–591. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-12341476

Borisenko, A. Y. and Hudiakov, Y. S. (2018) Bronze plaques from Northern Kyrgyzstan with representations of horsemen. *Archaeology, Ethnology & Anthropology of Eurasia*, 46 (3), 100–106. https://doi.org/10.17746/1563-0110.2018.46.3.100-106

Brandt, K. (2004). A language of their own: An interactionist approach to human-horse communication. *Society & Animals*, 12 (4), 299–316. https://doi.org/10.1163/1568530043068010

Brandt, K. (2006). Embodied subjectivity human-horse communication, in D. D. Waskul and P. Vannini (eds), *Body/Embodiment: Symbolic interaction and the sociology of the body*. Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge.

Brannaman, B. (2001). *The Faraway Horses*. Guildford, Connecticut: Lyons Press.

Bronowski, J. (1973) *The Ascent of Man*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company.

Cassidy, R. (2007). *Horse People: Thoroughbred culture in Lexington and Newmarket*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.1353/book.3375

Clayton, L., Hoy, J. and Underwood, J. (2001). *Vaqueros, Cowboys, and Buckaroos*. New York: University of Texas Press. https://doi.org/10.7560/712386-fm

Cohen, D. (1970). *A Modern Look at Monsters*. New York: Dodd Mead and Co.

Crooks, E. (2021). German pentathlon coach thrown out of Tokyo Games for punching a horse, *Independent*, 7 August 2021.

Cuckson, P. (2021). Modern pentathlon under fire after ugly scenes in riding phase, *Horse Sport*, 7 August 2021.

Das, S. (2005). *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107295575

Dashper, K. Fenner, K, Hyde, M., Probyn-Rapsey, F., Caspar, G., Henshall, C. and McGreevy, P. (2018). The anthropomorphic application of gender stereotypes to horses. *Anthrozoös*, 31 (6), 673–684. https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2018.1529349

De Beauvoir, S. ([1949] 1956). *The Second Sex*. New York: Vintage.

Duberstein, K. and Gilkeson, J. (2010). Determination of sex differences in personality and trainability of yearling horses utilizing a handler questionnaire. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 128 (1–4), 57–63. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2010.09.012

Fenner, K., Caspar, G., Hyde, M., Henshall, C., Dhand, N., Probyn-Rapsey, F., Dashper, K., McLean, A. and McGreevy, P. (2019). It's all about the sex, or is it? Humans, horses and temperament. *PLoS ONE*, 14 (5), e0216699. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0216699

Geutjens, C. A., Clayton, H. M. and Kaiser, L. J. (2008). Forces and pressures beneath the saddle during mounting from the ground and from a raised mounting platform. *The Veterinary Journal*, 175 (3), 332–337. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tvjl.2007.03.025

Gowing, L. (2003). *Common Bodies: Women, touch, and power in Seventeenth-Century England*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Harvey, E. (ed). (2003). *Sensible Flesh: On touch in early modern culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press. https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812293630

Hausberger, M., Roche, H., Henry, S. and Visser, E. K. (2008). A review of the human-horse relationship. *Applied Animal Behaviour Science*, 109 (1), 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.applanim.2007.04.015

Jacob, K. A. (1998). *Testament to Union: Civil war monuments in Washington, D.C.* Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press. https://doi.org/10.56021/9780801858611

Jones, J. (2020). *Horse Brain, Human Brain – The neuroscience of horsemanship*. London: Trafalgar Square Books.

Krueger, K. (2008). Social ecology of horses, in J. Korb and J. Heinze (eds), *Ecology of Social Evolution* (pp. 195–206). New York: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-540-75957-7_9

Lange, C. (2019). The making and the remaking of the Arabian horse – from the Arab Bedouin horse to the modern Straight Egyptian, in K. Guest and M. Mattfeld (eds), *Horse Breeds and Human Society: Purity, identity and the making of the modern horse*. Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429024009-18

Malinowski, K., Yee, C., Tevlin, J. M., Birks, E. K., Durando, M. M., Pournajafi-Nazarloo, H., Cavaiola, A. A. and McKeever, K. H. (2018). The effects of equine assisted therapy on plasma cortisol and oxytocin concentrations and heart rate variability in horses and measures of symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans. *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*, 64, 17–26. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jevs.2018.01.011

Maurstad, A., Davis, D. and Cowles, S. (2013). Co-being and intra-action in horse-human relationships: A multi-species ethnography of be(com)ing human and be(com)ing horse. *Social Anthropology*, 21 (3), 322–335. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-8676.12029

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1982). *Phenomenology of Perception*. Abingdon-on-Thames, Oxfordshire: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203981139

Meyer, C. and Wedelstaedt, U. (2017). Intercorporeality, interkinesthesia, and enaction, in C. Meyer and U. von Wedelstaedt (eds.), *Moving Bodies in Interaction – Interacting Bodies in Motion: Intercorporeality, interkinesthesia, and enaction in sports* (pp. 1–23). Amsterdam: John Benjamins. https://doi.org/10.1075/ais.8.01mey

Moraga, C. and Anzaldúa, G. (2015). *This Bridge Called my Back: Writings by radical women of color*. New York: SUNY Press.

Petitt, A. and Brandt-Off, K. (2022). Zoocialization: Learning together, becoming together in a multispecies triad. *Society & Animals*. https://doi.org/10.1163/15685306-bja10082

Rabitsch, S. and Salisbury, T. (2021). Don't leave out the cowboys! Black urban cowboydom and didactic Afrofuturist countermemories in *Ghetto Cowboy* (2011) and *Concrete Cowboy* (2021). *Western American Literature*, 57(2), 111–126. https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.2022.0013

Roberts, C. (2001). Biological behavior? Hormones, psychology, and sex. *NWSA Journal*, 12(3), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.2979/NWS.2000.12.3.1

Rousseau, J. J. (1762, 1953). *The Social Contract* (trans. Maurice Cranston). London: Penguin.

Sánchez, C. T., Castro, F. V. Herrera, S. S. and Juánez, J. C. (2014). Hormonal changes analysis by effects of horses assisted therapy in the autistic population. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 132, 87–91. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.282

Scopa, C., Greco, A., Contalbrigo, L., Fratini, E., Lanata, A., Scilingo, E. P. and Baragli, P. (2020). Inside the interaction: Contact with familiar humans modulates heart rate variability in horses. *Frontiers in Veterinary Science*, 7, 582759. https://doi.org/10.3389/fvets.2020.582759

Slatta, R. (1991). *Cowboys of the Americas*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
Swart, S. (2003). Riding high – Horses, power and settler society, c. 1654–1840. *Kronos*, 29, 47–63.
Swart, S. (2010). *Riding High – Horses, humans and history in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press. https://doi.org/10.18772/12010015140
Swart, S. (2016). Dangerous people or how I learned to stop worrying and love being an historian. *South African Historical Journal*, 68(3), 249–266. https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2016.1239966
Swart, S. (2021). Kicking over the traces? Freeing the animal from the archive, in J. Bonnell and S. Kheraj (eds.), *Traces of the Animal Past: Methodological challenges in animal history*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv2zrpcxw.4
Swart, S. (2022). How to invent a horse: Notes for a feminist history, in L. Birke and H. Wels (eds.), *Dreaming of Pegasus: Equine imaginings*. London: Victorina Press.
Traeen, B. and Wang, C. E. (2006). Perceived gender attribution, self-esteem, and general self-efficacy in female horseback riders. *Journal of Equine Veterinary Science*, 26(10), 439–444. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jevs.2006.08.007
Tullett, W. (2021). State of the field: Sensory history. *History*, 106, 804–820. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-229X.13246
Wipper, A. (2000). The partnership: The horse-rider relationship in eventing. *Symbolic Interaction*, 23(1) 47–70. https://doi.org/10.1525/si.2000.23.1.47
Wuerch, M. A., Giesbrecht, C. J. Jeffery, N. Knutson, T. and Wach, F. (2021). Intimate partner violence and concern for animal care and safekeeping: Experiences of service providers in Canada. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 36(9–10), 4815–4825. https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260518795503
Yorke, J., Nugent, W., Strand, E., Bolen, R., New, J. and Davis, C. (2013). Equine-assisted therapy and its impact on cortisol levels of children and horses: a pilot study and meta-analysis. *Early Child Development and Care*, 183(7), 874–894. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2012.693486

Citation: Swart, S. (2024). Shared Skin: The Slow Intimacy of Horse and Rider. *Feminist Encounters: A Journal of Critical Studies in Culture and Politics*, 8(1), 13. https://doi.org/10.20897/femenc/14224