A Geography of Horse-Riding

A Geography of Horse-Riding: The Spacing of Affect, Emotion and (Dis)ability Identity through Horse-Human Encounters

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INTRODUCTION

> "If the body in emotional geography is a way of recognising differences, of recognising the human in humanity, then affectual geography's body is both universal and also prior to its constitution in social relations. As a consequence, the singular body ceases to be of political or ethical interest. Instead, the focus of political and ethical theorising turns towards interactions between bodies and (the manipulation of) flows of affect" (Pile 2010, 11).

The field of human geography revels in engaging with ideas from across disciplines and bringing them together through diverse spatial perspectives and philosophies. As I write, an "affective turn" is emerging from work on the body and on the emotions; fusing together mind/body, and reasons/passions through considering new configurations of bodies, technologies and matter (Clough and Halley 2007). This has introduced a sense of the "continual motion" (Stewart 2007) and vitality of life as it unfolds to human geography. *Geographies of horse-riding* seeks to contribute to such research by addressing the workings of inter-bodily/inter-species affect between horse and rider. As one of the closet relationships between humans and animals, horse-riding provides an interesting site through which to contribute to thinking about affect, particularly in decentring the human as we consider the social.

Over the course of researching for and writing *Geographies of horse-riding* I have considered many approaches to affect and emotion, finally synthesising the ideas that appear in this book through a detailed empirical exploration of riding. My reflections on affect and emotion are filtered through the lens of my own personal experiences of working with horses in the racing industry for twenty years. This introductory chapter describes the personal origins of this research before giving a detailed chapter synopsis of the remainder of the book.

The wounded storyteller

> "As wounded, people may be cared for, but as storytellers, they care for others […] In stories, the teller not only recovers her voice; she becomes a witness to the conditions that rob others of their voices. When any person

> recovers his voice, many people begin to speak through that story" (Frank 1995, xiii).

I begin the story on which *Geographies of horse-riding* is based in 2000 when I was pursuing my dream of riding as an apprentice flat jockey. Conforming to the stereotype in which little girls are obsessed with horses (Holbrook Pierson 2001) I had been determined to make them a part of my life from a young age. The combination of a well-watched video tape of the film *National Velvet* in which a young girl disguised as a male jockey wins the Grand National, and an enjoyment of the thrill of galloping at speed on my long-suffering pony Dancer led me eventually to the British Racing School. From here, after a spell learning the ropes as a "stable lass", I progressed to riding as a jockey for an Arab horse racing yard. Armed with a video tape of a winning ride I approached thoroughbred trainer Neville Callaghan in Newmarket, the headquarters of racing, and was finally licensed as an apprentice flat jockey. The following season I gained employment as apprentice to trainer Rod Millman. The year 2000 was one in which I felt I was beginning to progress as a jockey. I built up a good relationship with two of the yard's sprint horses, "Lord Kintyre" and "Paradise Lane" and was able to ride at several high profile televised race meetings. This exposure was beginning to open up opportunities for me to ride for additional trainers and gain recognition within the horse racing world.

In racing stables each employee is generally allocated around four horses which it is their responsibility to "do". This involves mucking out their stables in the mornings and evenings, giving them a thorough groom in the afternoon and generally getting to know them well enough to spot any injuries, illness or psychological problems. One of my four was "Lord Harley", a three year old bay gelding who had been my responsibility in the yard from when he arrived as an unbroken yearling in the winter of 1998. Looking after Harley could be a tough job; he was a very cheeky horse who was handy with his teeth (a prime target was the back of your legs while you were looking the other way), and he was one of those horses who seem to frequently require attention for various ailments. I remember having to trudge down to the furthest end of the yard to the isolation stable where he was banished following a suspected virus and staying behind after work to wait for the chiropractor to sort out his sore back. I also rode Harley daily in his exercise, he was considered a "good ride" in that he was generally easy to manage and not overly strong. It was important for the same person to ride him daily so that any problems in his occasionally bad back could be recognised quickly and I soon struck up a friendship with him.

On 21 November 2000 I was engaged to ride Harley in a 13 runner handicap race run over a mile on the all-weather sand track at Wolverhampton. On the only previous occasion in which I had ridden him in a race we had finished second, beaten only the distance of a "short-head" and I was confident that he would run well for me again given the partnership we had struck up. It was a bitterly cold, grey day and I hoped it wouldn't start snowing before we headed home. After warning the girl who was to prepare Harley for the race (grooming him and leading him around the parade ring) that he was apt to bite if the opportunity arose, I headed for the changing rooms for the ritual of "weighing out" for the race. A steward shouted "jockeys for the 1.40" and I followed the others out to the parade ring to get my tactical instructions from the trainer before getting on Harley. I have always suffered from pre-race nerves: a mixture of excitement, worry about messing up and getting beaten and about whether or not the horse is going to behave. On mounting the horse however, my nerves dissipated as winning the race became the focal point.

The stalls for the mile race were positioned in front of the stands on the circular track. There is an underlying tension at the start of a race as the stalls can be the place where things are most likely to go wrong. Horses are "fight or flight" animals and the stalls as a confined space can sometimes prove overwhelming for some animals that will panic or refuse to enter despite rigorous training at home. Harley was a professional in the stalls and I had no worries about him, I knew he would jump out quickly and I planned to ride him close to the pace, sitting handy up with the leaders so that on the home turn, two furlongs from the finish, I would be in a good position to take on the horses that were going well. We stood patiently in our stall as the other horses were loaded, I put my goggles over my eyes as the starter announced "three to go… two to go…..one to go, JOCKEYS", bang, the gates opened and we were off. Keep straight to the orange markers on either side of the track and then at the first bend take up my position one horse off the inside rail…perfect position, sit and hold my place….

The stewards called it "accidental bunching" as the horses on my outside pushed to get a good position in the field of runners. At only 15.2 hands high Harley was perhaps small for a racehorse, had he been bigger and more butch he might have managed to keep his footing. Witnesses described him being knocked off his feet as I was tossed through the air like a rag doll but I don't remember those seconds, just the crush of bones as I hit the sand under the running rail. I hit left leg first and I can only describe the sensation as similar to a glass vase smashing inside a paper bag. I could feel all these little pieces of bone replacing what had been a

solid form and I remember vividly the smell and touch of the cold wet sand. For the first few minutes shock and adrenalin served to act as a barrier to any pain and the sudden switch from what I had been doing gave the situation a surreal ambience. Within seconds I was surrounded by people and felt very self-conscious at being the centre of attention. "Where's Harley? Where's Harley?" No one would answer.

On arrival at hospital I was no longer a jockey, I became a body on a trolley as scissors cut through my expensive riding boots. Harley was euthanized at the scene. I had suffered two spiral fractures to my left tibia, smashed my left fibula into too many pieces to count, sustained a "misaligned" left wrist, a bruised pelvis and two black eyes to top it off. The surgeon told me that my injuries were very similar to those sustained in motorcycle accidents and that I had done the equivalent of jumping from a car at 35 mph. During two weeks in hospital I had two operations to pin my leg back together with an external "fixator" and one to have my wrist pinned back together. The original prognosis was that I would be back riding in four months but this was to prove very optimistic. The bones in my leg refused to begin the healing process and I was unable to bear any weight on it for six months which meant using a wheelchair. I had been transferred to the hospital nearest my family and once a month we would head there for more x-rays. I would sit silently as the surgeons would discuss my leg, my bones, the x-rays, and then, remembering a mind was attached to the body, tell me to come back in another month. A period of uncertainty passed during which it was unclear whether or not my leg would have to be amputated and then I was introduced to a new surgeon who was skilled in the application of the metal work that had been holding my bones together. Eventually, with his expertise my leg began to heal. After twelve months I made it to a rehabilitation centre where the long process of remaking my body was to begin. Shortly afterwards, although still using crutches, I was back on a horse and three years later I was back race-riding again.

During my injury time I was supported by two racing organisations, the Injured Jockeys Fund (IJF) and the Jockey Employment Training Scheme (JETS). After I spent a short period of time working in administration, the IJF and JETS secured funding for me to complete an undergraduate degree. My experiences through my racing career have become intertwined with my intellectual interests. After a lecture on the social construction of gender I became aware of how the social identity of female jockeys is constructed through the site of the body. I produced an undergraduate dissertation on the ways in which female jockeys have been subject to socio-spatial exclusion based around their corporeal differences

from male jockeys. Through an MSc I built upon these feminist concerns by turning attention to the marginal place of animals in academic research, devising a methodology to consider the embodied expressions of animals (this methodology will be explained in detail in Chapter Three).

In *The Wounded Storyteller* Frank (1995) suggests that people tell stories to make sense of their suffering during illness. While my story is one based on accident and injury rather than illness, the same purpose perhaps holds true:

> "Stories have to *repair* the damage that illness has done to the ill person's sense of where she is in life, and where she may be going. Stories are a way of re-drawing maps and finding new destinations" (Frank 1995, 53).

Stories of illness or disability also often take the form of a journey through which the narrator undergoes a degree of transformation. Frank (1995, 118) categorises this as a "quest" narrative: "Quest stories of illness imply that the teller has been given something by the experience, usually some insight that must be passed on to others". Through my experiences of injury I became witness to conditions experienced by people with disabilities. These experiences, combined with my interest in feminist concerns with the body, and thinking about the place of animals in geography, have ultimately framed the nature of this research.

Framing the research

After the accident I had two of what I think of as "special" moments with horses. It was six months before I was able to use crutches to hop far enough to actually touch a friend's horse over a stable door. I stood leaning on my crutches and felt so happy to be in the company of a horse again—it is not a feeling that is easy to articulate. Perhaps a combination of her smell, the feel of her coat, or something about being in a horse's presence that just felt good? Within this research I wanted to investigate further what is so special about being around horses. Research into the therapeutic benefits of interacting with animals has largely been concentrated within the field of animal-assisted therapy (see Fine 2006a). While a body of literature exists on "therapeutic geographies" (see Chapter One) this concentrates largely upon landscapes and place. Considering interactions between horses and riders provides an opportunity to explore our spatialised, embodied relationships with non-human others.

My second "moment" came when I first got back on a horse. It was nearly a year after the accident and on a day that was unusually warm for the winter, I was sitting outside waiting for two friends to return from

riding out. As they dismounted something unspoken passed between us and we all grinned as one friend said "come on, get on then!" The horse "Kenda" was one that I had previously looked after and ridden daily when she was in training as a racehorse so I knew her well. Getting on was problematic and more than a little painful as the ankle of my left leg was still fairly immobile despite undergoing physiotherapy. Kenda stood perfectly still as I hauled myself into the saddle. Did she have some sort of empathetic understanding that I was in pain or was she behaving because she knew my friend might get cross with her if she didn't? These are issues that I want to reflect upon further within this book by considering knowledges that are created through the body, and by addressing concerns that animals be approached as individuals with their own thoughts and feelings. What might it mean to include horses within current theories of emotion and affect? I was led carefully round the yard and very quickly progressed to riding out sedately round the roads, a secret kept from doctors who had advised against it. Physically this was integral to my return to walking unaided again. Physio exercises are tedious and painful and require a great deal of commitment, when I was riding I had no choice but to move my ankle with the movement of the horse. Mentally the feeling of getting out and about after being cooped up in a room for so long was indescribable. While rehabilitation after injury necessitates a "remaking" of the body (Seymour 1998), riding itself is a practice through which one must learn to use the body in new ways. Thus riding provides a site through which to consider the interest of disability geography in the interconnections between people with mind-body differences (Butler and Parr 1999).

While risk is a part of everyday life when working with racehorses, the possibility of disablement is generally pushed to the back of one's mind and evaded as a topic of conversation. Gallier (1988) describes how, on breaking her back in a fall from a horse, her fellow stable staff avoided visiting through a reluctance to confront the realities of the job. In my case visits from my peers were also awkward and tailed off fairly quickly as my disablement persisted. The idea of illness or injury as a personal tragedy has underpinned thinking about disability. This has been categorised as a "medical model" which classifies bodies in terms of their functional deficits (Oliver 1984, Brisenden 1986: see Chapter One). Disability was presented to me as a catastrophe, and the surgeons' uncertainty over the permanence of my injury seemed the end of my world. While I was bed-bound I was visited by representatives from the IJF and JETS. Dana Mellor of JETS immediately set about working out a plan of what I was going to *do*. My state of limbo and feeling a victim of misfortune was not

allowed to last long as we discussed possible means of gaining skills that might open up opportunities for other careers. A tutor complete with laptop was duly despatched and I also began an Open University course from my bed. In regular get-togethers with other IJF beneficiaries I saw further evidence of this proactive attitude as the emphasis for all was on what positive steps could be taken to make life better. This led me to interrogate the notion of "disability" more closely. Through my experiences I became well aware of the disabling environments that are the focus of a "social model" of disability in which the ablest practices of society oppress people with disabilities (an outing in my wheelchair to the local shops was a horrific experience never to be repeated). However, my experiences with the Injured Jockeys Fund have also led to an interest in approaches to disability that allow for positive conceptions of mind/body differences. These include affirmative approaches to disability (Swain and French 2000) and poststructural approaches that view disability identity as fluid (these will be explored in detail in Chapter One).

Geographies of horse-riding is framed around a number of broad aims that draw firstly from my experiences of temporary disablement and of horse behaviour, and secondly from my intellectual interests in animal thinking and in feminist concerns with the body. Through research with participants drawn from groups of both "disabled" and "non-disabled" horse-riders, these broad aims are as follows:

- To explore spaces of relating between horses and humans. What is the nature of the intensities of feeling that pass between them?
- To develop disability geography through the context of horse-riding to consider the fluidity of disability identities. Can riding enable people to transgress both their physical limits and those imposed upon them by the category "disabled"?
- To look at the spacing of emotion and affect between horses and humans.
- To consider the thoughts and feelings of individual horses on the practice of horse-riding.

These aims will be more fully developed through Chapters One and Two which situate the research within literature on animal and disability geographies, and present a theoretical framework which further refines these aims.

Chapter synopsis

Although drawing creatively from theorists such as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) (see Chapter Two), the research that forms the basis of *Geographies of horse-riding* is presented within a traditional format. The aims of the research are developed through a literature review in Chapters One and Two, followed by a methodological chapter and four discussion chapters that each build layers (although not a full picture) of the horse-human relationship. Chapter One situates an exploration of horse-riding within literature on disability and animal geographies, identifying possible cross-over points of interest. Disability studies are traced through the medical and social models, before more recent "affirmative" approaches to disability are outlined that I suggest might be more relevant to my experiences with the IJF. Work within geography is identified that seeks to move beyond the opposition of "disabled" and "non-disabled" in ways that might develop what Parr (2007) terms "hopeful ontologies" of mind-body difference. In taking these ideas further I then review work within disability studies that has begun to use ideas from poststructuralism to view disability identities as fluid. I briefly review the use of horses in therapeutic practice and identify how such contexts can take forward work within therapeutic geographies using ideas from non-representational theory (NRT). The remainder of the chapter moves on to situate the research within animal geographies suggesting further engagement with the embodied becomings of animals through NRT inspired approaches. To conclude, this chapter pushes for a focus upon "trans-species" being in the world (Wolfe 2008) to consider the horse-human relationship.

Chapter Two develops the points made in Chapter One by discussing the use of the "centaur" to describe the horse-human relationship. In critiquing this concept I draw creatively upon Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) "body without organs" (BwO) as an alternate figuration. Current work on the geographies of emotion and affect is reviewed, situating the practice of horse-riding within the work of theorists that include Latour (2004) and Brennan (2004). I consider the dynamics of power between horses and humans, complicating accounts of domination with a view to exploring how affective interactions are imbued with differing modalities of power (Allen 2003). In summary, this chapter brings the theoretical concerns of the research into a list of key concepts that will be used throughout the discussion chapters.

Chapter Three outlines the research design and methodologies chosen to ground the theoretical concerns of this research empirically. A non-representational theory (NRT) inspired research design drawing upon

ideas of "performance ethnography" (Morton 2005) is developed in order to capture horse-human relating as it happens. The methodological strategies chosen are discussed; namely video recording, ethnography "on the hoof" and diary-keeping. Research sites and participants included both "Riding for the Disabled" groups and "able-bodied" groups of riders.

As the first of four empirical discussion chapters, Chapter Four, drawing upon the concept of "body-without-organs", explores the early stages of learning to ride and the lesson procedure used in the participating riding schools. I show how beginner riders were frustrated in their attempts to learn and outline the things that held them back such as self-consciousness. I look at how instructors help riders overcome problems in order to make a connection to the horse; this included different teaching techniques and learning to recognise horses as emotional beings with their own views on relationships with humans. As a whole this chapter is a human centred one that aims to detail the first stages of how humans attempt to make connections with horses by becoming sensitive to, and learning to be affected by, new ways of knowing the world.

In recognising that horses are emotional beings, beginner riders had to work out how to achieve cooperation from the horses they rode. Chapter Five investigates how these relationships are imbued with power in a way that is more complicated than mere domination of the horse. In this chapter I look at how differing modalities of power (Allen 2003) work through horse-human relationships. I begin by documenting affective relations between horses in their feral and domestic state, suggesting that forms of power are immanent to the workings of the horse herd and that these are relevant to the ways in which humans interact with horses. I explore how instrumental modalities of power (manipulation, coercion, seduction and authority work through empirical instances of horse-human relating, and likewise the workings of associational modalities of power and generosity complicating their position as oppositional to instrumental modalities.

Moving on from the creation of the horse-human relationship, Chapter Six focuses upon the intensities of feeling and energy that circulate through the horse-rider assemblage. I explore how tension and calm can circulate between horse and rider or between members of groups. I return to "centaurs" and the "body without organs" to try to define what occurs when riders describe feeling "at one" with a horse. Lastly this chapter reports on how riders fixed affect into subjective emotions in their reflections upon their riding experiences, looking in particular at feelings of confidence and mobility.

Chapter Seven returns to the binary oppositions noted in chapters One and Two around disabled/nondisabled and nature/culture to explore how participants live within and beyond such categorisations. I show how "disability" is reproduced as a negative category through some of the practices of "Riding for the Disabled Association" (RDA) groups, and how impairment became an important part of identity for some participants. Conversely, I also present details of empowering practices that took place through RDA groups and enabled participants to identify as riders rather than as disabled. This chapter explores how the borders of disabled/nondisabled and human/nonhuman were frequently crossed through communicative practices between those with and without the capacity for verbal language. This included speaking for nonverbal others and of learning to read expressive behaviours. I also report on how riders simply enjoyed being in the presence of horses. Finally a concluding discussion is presented in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER ONE

SETTING THE SCENE: CROSSING POINTS BETWEEN ANIMAL STUDIES AND DISABILITY STUDIES

Recently Wolfe (2008) has highlighted a small subfield of work in which authors view some forms of "disability" as forms of "able-ness" in the context of interacting with animals. These include Grandin (2005) who suggests that her autism enables her to think in pictures in the same way as animals. This has led her to work closely with livestock handling facilities where she points out small details of the environment that may upset or frighten cattle. Likewise Wolfe notes that horse trainer Roberts (1996) has a form of colour blindness that enhances his micro-perception of horses' body language (although this is not something that Roberts himself focuses on, instead referring to the hours and hours spent observing horses in their natural environment, see Roberts 1996), and finally Prince-Hughes (2004) who claims that her experiences of Aspergers enabled her to understand the language of gorillas. Wolfe uses these examples, Grandin in particular, to bring together disability and animal studies to challenge the denial within liberal humanism of an inner life to those who do not think in language. Rather than bringing these two disciplines together in an obvious way to look at shared forms of marginalisation Wolfe suggests that the aforementioned examples emphasis a unique form of subjectivity. Instead of thinking of a guide dog and blind person in terms of "disabled" or "normal", attention should be turned to shared trans-species being in the world as constituted by relations of trust, respect, dependence and communication. In this chapter I will suggest that a study of horse-riding is well placed to further develop this idea and additionally to explore other possible areas of shared interest between disability geographies and animal geographies, such as theorising of the body and emotions.

This chapter takes the form of a review of the sub-disciplines of disability and animal geographies, with the aim of situating an exploration of horse-riding. It seeks to identify areas where disability and animal geographies might cross over; these will be developed in Chapter Two

where the key concepts used through the book will also be explained. Here I begin with an overview of disability geographies. In the introductory chapter, I described how my experience of temporary disablement moved from a perspective in which I saw myself as a victim of misfortune, to being able to view my accident as an opportunity to change my life and acquire new skills. The positive stance of the charity The Injured Jockeys Fund towards enhancing opportunities for former jockeys with disabilities led me to consider what a more affirmative approach to disablement might mean for disability studies. This chapter is split into three parts. The first part *Geographies of disability* critiques disability studies, exploring engagement with poststructuralist theory as a means to develop disability geography beyond dualisms of disabled/non-disabled and towards the complexity of fluid identities (Imrie and Edwards 2007). The second part *Cross-species encounters* introduces the use of animals in therapeutic practice, suggesting that an exploration of horse-riding will allow an engagement with the agency of nonhuman nature within therapeutic geographies. The third part focuses upon *Animal geographies*, within which there has been significant engagement with relational ontologies (the links between these and disability geography will be made in Chapter Two). Finally in summarising this chapter I note points of connection between disability and animal geographies that will be elaborated upon in Chapter Two.

Geographies of disability

The study of disability within geography has been entangled with developments within disability studies more generally, in particular by developing in parallel to the well-documented dualism of the medical model and the social model (Chouinard 1997, Park *et al.* 1998, Butler and Parr 1999). The "medical model" of disability is rooted in clinical diagnosis (Brisenden 1986), for example the classification of the functional defects of the individual:

> "From this perspective, which remains the dominant one in our society, disabled people are dependent because their bodies, senses or minds are somehow 'defective' and don't allow them to function independently. In short, they are 'not normal', and a return to normality, or some approximation of it, becomes the goal of rehabilitation practice" (Goble 2004, 42).

This biological determinist approach has also been termed "personal tragedy theory" whereby disability is seen as a random occurrence that

ruins lives (French and Swain 2004). With a policy-orientated focus, behaviourist geographers such as Golledge (1991, 1993) and Dear (1978), worked to "solve the problems these special populations encounter in normal commerce with physical and built environments" (Golledge 1993, 63). This work established disability geography as a distinct sub-discipline and highlighted the possibilities of using a spatial perspective, yet it was also critiqued for reproducing the idea that people with disabilities such as visual impairments are inferior and incompetent (see Butler 1994).

The "social model" of disability developed in the late 1970s as an antithesis to the medical model (Hughes 2002), and as fuel for the disability rights movement. Rather than impairment as the cause of the marginalisation of disabled people in society, it was argued that the dominant ablest practices of society were the cause of oppression (Oliver 1984, 2004). The social model had a liberating effect on disabled people, identifying social barriers rather than impairments as restraining their lives—barriers that could be challenged (Thomas 2004). Working within a social model, geographers began to explore the ways in which social and political processes produce disabling barriers in the physical environment. This includes the historical-geographical relationships that have placed disabled people in society; "… disability is a social experience which arises from the specific ways in which society organises its fundamental activities (i.e. work, transport, leisure, education, domestic life)" (Gleeson 1999, 194). Similarly, barriers have been identified in the design and planning of the built environment which Imrie (1996, 2004, 2008), suggests are dominated by a normality paradigm. The association of disability with that of a medical problem influences policy responses to impairment:

> "In the context of the built environment, it tends to reinforce the notion that the body must be 'fixed' to fit the environment, thus emphasizing cure and rehabilitation. Socio-cultural prejudices are ignored, disablism does not exist" (Imrie 1996, 48).

Historically specific socio-spatial worlds have also been examined by geographers exploring psychiatric disability (Philo 1987, 1995a, Parr and Philo 1995); and in relation to learning disability (Hall and Kearns 2001, Hall 2004, 2005).

A key point of tension within the social model is the distinction between impairment and disability. The split between the medical and the social model effectively creates binaries between the body and the social as the social model seeks to distance itself from medical explanations for disability. "Impairment" has been considered immaterial to the goals of the social model to challenge social processes with the result that the body

came to be viewed as an inert object; "… a body devoid of meaning, a dysfunctional, anatomical, corporeal mass obdurate in its resistance to signification and phenomenologically dead, without intentionality or agency" (Paterson and Hughes 1999, 329). This medicalisation of disabled bodies versus the politicisation of their social lives was challenged by feminist thinkers as a patriarchal separation of the personal from the public realm (Thomas 1999). Feminists also criticised the social model for a lack of attention to differences such as race, gender, class and sexuality (Butler and Bowlby 1997, Wendall 1997), and to mental differences (Thomas and Corker 2002). Drawing upon feminist critique, scholars began to advocate embodied accounts of disability, not in opposition to, but as a way to extend the social model (Hughes and Paterson 1997, Corker 1998a, Moss and Dyck 1999, Williams G 2001, Turner 2001). Within geography, this has included documenting the experiences of women with MS (Dyck 1995), biographical work (Chouinard 1995) and embodiment in relation to work and home (Moss and Dyck 1996).

In UK disability studies, research continues to be dominated by the social model, with Hughes (2009) going so far as to suggest that (within the UK) disability studies are not particularly open to new dialogue with theories of the body. Shakespeare (2006) continues to challenge the social model, proposing that in the UK the social model has reached a dead-end in terms of what it can further achieve. Instead he argues for a relational approach based on the interplay of individual and contextual factors. Geographers have made significant contributions to relational understandings of disability, in particular by working to destabilize the dualisms inherent in the social model such as mind/body, impairment/disability, biology/culture. These accounts attempt to extend embodied accounts of disability by viewing mind/body differences on a continuum (Parr and Butler 1999), including the materiality of the body (Hall 2000) and viewing disability as a fluid identity category (Holt 2003, 2004, 2007). Before discussing these approaches in detail, I first want to outline a third model within disability studies, the affirmative model.

An affirmative model of disability

Swain and French (2000) propose that a new model of disability is emerging in which impairment and disability have been embraced as part of a positive social identity. Rejecting the tragic view of disability, the Disability Arts Movement in particular, has begun to demonstrate the *collective* celebration of difference (Onken and Slaten 2004, Taylor 2008). Disabled people assert many incidences in which impairment can have

positive outcomes for the individual, such as, creating opportunities for education, changes in lifestyle and rejecting pressures to conform to society's norms and expectations. Collectively, being part of a campaigning group can be exciting and liberating as frustration at exclusion can be shared and used to bring about change:

> "Essentially, impairment which is social death and invalidates disabled people in a non-disabled society, provides a social context for disabled people to transcend the constraints of non-disabled norms, roles and identity and affirm their experiences, values and identity" (Swain and French 2000, 576).

While the social model enabled ownership of the meaning of disability, the affirmation model empowers people to take ownership and control over what is done to their bodies. Swain and French suggest that the affirmative model can strengthen the social model by pursuing a quest for equal rights that values all in a celebration of difference and by bringing more disabled people together collectively. This, they go onto suggest, should be developed through recognition that policy, practice and provision can only be "inclusive" by taking account of disability culture (although whether a unified disability culture exists is debated—see Peters 2000) and the emergence of the affirmative model. However, problematically they also assert that:

> "Quintessentially, the affirmative model is held by disabled people about disabled people. Its theoretical significance can also only be developed by disabled people who are 'proud, angry and strong' in resisting the tyranny of the personal tragedy model of disability and impairment" (Swain and French 2000, 581).

This appears to contradict the goal of inclusion for all stated throughout their paper and draws attention to the personal at the expense of theoretical and methodological innovation (Worth 2008). Morris (1991, 1994) also concurs with the notion that impairment can be associated with a positive identity. Yet by identifying disabled people as a separate group from "non-disabled" people, impairment is essentialised and those people who may situate themselves on the disabled/non-disabled borderlands are excluded (Thomas 1999, Galvin 2003). Additionally some people may not identify themselves as disabled, for example, Beart (2005) documents how a group of learning disabled people did not view the "learning disabled" category as relevant to them. Critiquing disability identity politics more widely, Galvin (2003) points out how such approaches perpetuate a

reliance on the binary oppositions implicit in the social model such as biological/social. Non-recognition of differences that include class, race and gender, along with the neglect of psychological, emotional and bodily experiences of disability, serves to exclude people who would otherwise identify as disabled and subscribe to a collective notion of emancipation:

> "I do not negate the value of seeking more positive ways of being identified, but I believe that these new subjective states must be mapped out from beyond the categorisations which are responsible for our marginalisation. What we *can* celebrate however, is the strength we have developed through learning to survive in a world which relies on such negative identifications, our ability to create beautiful things from the rubble of our marginalisation and, ultimately, our capacity to devise new ways of seeing ourselves, which are inclusive of our impairments, but which exist outside of 'disability" (Galvin 2003, 683).

As a researcher who has experienced the fluidity of moving between categories of "disabled" and "non-disabled" I now return to the work of geographers who seek to move beyond a disabled/non-disabled, biological/social dichotomy in ways that might allow for a more positive conception of disability by thinking beyond categorisations.

Moving beyond disabled/non-disabled binaries

Parr and Butler (1999) challenge the notion of the existence of the perfect healthy body, arguing that we all experience impairment and illness to a greater or lesser degree. They consider links between various disparate strands of work within geography such as medical geography, disability geography and the geography of mental health, and interconnections between the everyday experiences of people with mind-body differences. Whilst not situating themselves explicitly within an affirmative model of disability/impairment, they state the wish to explore associations between *positive* experiences of community and resistance to embodied and social limitations imposed by mind-body differences:

> "To state this is not to deny the specific recognition, and in certain cases assistance, which some states-of-being require in material, medical and social ways, but rather it is to deny that such difference has to equal a series of fixed and othering boundaries by which people are clearly defined and geographies are narrowly understood" (Parr and Butler 1999, 9).

This focus will allow exploration of the ways in which different minds and bodies are ‘”othered” by the imaginings of those who subscribe to the possibility of attaining a mythical norm.

This provides a useful starting point for thinking about the practice of horse-riding. Riding schools in the UK are governed by the British Horse Society (BHS) a registered charity whose duties include promoting the education and training of the public in horse-related matters. The BHS is implicitly ablest. For instance, although they have a racial equality statement, the BHS advice leaflet “Are you starting to ride” (Reed 2005) suggests that the requirements for rider fitness are joint suppleness, joint flexibility, correct type of musculature, lower back strength, upper body posture and mental confidence. It is arguable that this is a mythical figure that even “non-disabled” people cannot attain, and certainly serves to exclude the 25,000 people who ride with the “Riding for the Disabled” organisation. By considering interconnections between all riders along the mind-body spectrum of differences it will be possible to explore the diversity of practices of riding and to celebrate the varied ways of achieving the aim of communicating with horses:

> “… the realities of impaired bodies as experienced must be centralised, but always in a fashion rendering such realities as ‘extraordinarily ordinary’. The issue becomes someone going about their business, and perhaps having to make adjustments that are greater than is true of some other people, but still on the same spectrum as what ‘we’ *all* have to do in order to achieve anything” (Hansen and Philo 2006, 502).

Parr and Butler (1999) suggest that interconnections between people be explored through destabilizing the mind/body dualism and considering disability in a multidimensional fashion through “body space”—which they define as the space in which the physical, biomedical body moves and expresses itself—and the inseparable “mind space” of the internal imagination and the unconscious:

> “By referring to mind and body spaces, we are thereby referring to the mutual importance and interrelationship of physicality and emotion, of the corporeal and the imaginative, and of the bodily and of identity. We are arguing, in a relatively straightforward manner, that the mind and body are not separate, but rather fused in complex physiological, psychological and sociological ways” (Parr and Butler 1999, 14).

Also seeking to destabilise the mind-body dualism, Hall (2000, 28) argues for increased attention to the “blood, brains and bones”, and lived experience of the in-between spaces of these binary pairs:

> "Only when we recognise that the geography of health and impairment involves a complex interaction of biological and social processes centred in the body will we be able to respond to the issues that concern people affected by illness and impairment, which arguably includes us all at some time in our lives".

In engaging with these "in-between" spaces Holt (2003, 2004, 2007) deconstructs divisions between disabled/non-disabled through empirical work that examines the everyday lived experiences of school children with mind-body differences. The micro-spaces of the classroom demonstrate specific moments in space and time; "…rather than an essential identity positioning, (dis)ability is a set of discursive and performative practices, which are socio-spatially shifting" (Holt 2004, 220). This work has relevance for allowing a positive conception of disability. In viewing identity as transient, Parr (2008) is able to work towards a "hopeful ontology" that recognises positive experiences of people with mental health problems. In exploring community mental health projects involving activities such as art work and gardening, a new geography of collectivity and creativity is proposed that recognises identity movements:

> "…potential movements from an 'enclosed identity' as mental patients – where this label signifies negative and static connotations […] to 'disclosive identities' whereby embodied participation in particular spaces is seen to enable multiple disclosures of the skills, abilities, strategies, tactics, personalities and achievements of the people who participate" (Parr 2008, 27).

This approach has possibilities for a positive disability identity that does not rely on the fixed essential positioning of the affirmation model. Attention is turned towards positive transgressions of the limits imposed upon people by negative categorisation. In order to develop this idea I now turn to research currently emerging from disability studies that engages with post structuralism

Engaging with post-structuralism in disability studies

Within disability studies a small corpus of work has begun to destabilize the mind/body dualism by engaging with postmodern and poststructuralist approaches. These embrace the idea that life does not reside within fixed and othering corporeal boundaries, and it is here, I will argue, that the tools can be found to explore mind and body spaces in relation to connecting with animals. Within disability studies the postmodern turn has

been demonstrated by work on cultural representations of impairment (Shakespeare 2004), deafness (Corker 1998b) and the use of phenomenology (Hughes and Paterson 1997). Drawing in part on Judith Butler's (1993, 1999) distinction between sex and gender, postmodern approaches to disability consider how the body is constructed as disabled, impaired or "normal". Such categories are viewed as fluid and always in process. In a collection edited by Corker and Shakespeare (2002) that explores such contributions to disability studies, scholars draw on a variety of theorists such as Merleau-Ponty, Foucault and Deleuze to engage with relationships between the embodied subject and the world. The editors suggest that postmodern (within which they include poststructuralism) ideas can contribute to creating more inclusive societies by engaging with the complexities of people's lives. In one chapter of this edited collection, Shildrick and Price (2002) (who each identify as either "disabled" or "non-disabled") work towards this aim by writing together to fragment the concept of identity and look to the way all corporeal boundaries are ever changing:

> "… the instability of the disabled body is but an extreme instance of the instability of all bodies. It is not just that any body can 'break down' in illness or as the result of accident, but that, for all, the 'bits and pieces' are held together in contingent ways. Final integration is never achieved" (Shildrick and Price, 2002, 72).

Although this approach breaches the disabled/non-disabled dichotomy, Hughes (2009) critiques this work as having a negative focus that "makes disabled people of us all", instead he advocates looking beyond the natural limits of the body to the capabilities and possibilities that reside within us all; "…it is important to argue that, despite its vulnerability the body's materiality is indeterminate and its limits negotiable" (Hughes, 2009, 402). This has been taken up within disability studies by the use of concepts drawn from the work of Giles Deleuze (a philosopher) and Felix Guattari (a Lacanian therapist) who have co-authored several important theoretical texts that propose new theories of intra psychic and social functioning. Central to their work is a challenge to the concept of a unified autonomous subject. Their first co-authored work *Anti-Oedipus* (1983) was an analysis of political desire. Based upon opposition to Freud's Oedipus complex that restricts the production of desire to a want for something lacking, Deleuze and Guattari view desire as a "productive outpouring of energy" (Schroeder 2005) that allows for experimentation and the creation of new connections. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) (ATP), the sequel to the first book, puts forward a different way of thinking, a move

from striated space of hierarchies and rigid categories, to "nomad" thought which breaks away from established routes.

Massumi (1987, xv) suggests that in reading Deleuze and Guattari's ATP, the reader is invited to use it as a "toolbox":

> "The best way of all to approach the book is to read it as a challenge: to pry open the vacant spaces that would enable you to build your life and those of the people around you into a plateau of intensity that would leave afterimages of its dynamism that could be reinjected into still other lives, creating a fabric of heightened states between which any number, the greatest number, of connecting routes would exist. Some might call that promiscuous. Deleuze and Guattari call it revolution. The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body?"

This is indeed how it has been approached by feminists (Grosz 1994, Braidotti 2005/06), and by disability scholars, who, while acknowledging that Deleuze and Guattari do not explicitly address disabled bodies, have drawn on several key concepts from their work to bypass categories of disabled and non-disabled and to open up spaces of resistance. These engagements have included a special issue on "Deleuze, Disability and Difference" in the *Journal of Literary & Cultural Studies*, in which authors think "with" rather than for and against Deleuzoguattarian thought (Kuppers and Overboe 2009). Themes here include alternative forms of physical embodiment through poetry and performance (Kuppers 2009), the material changes caused by affective encounters with literature, music and dance (Hickey-Moody 2009) and transgressive cultural narratives (Bayliss 2009). Earlier engagements include taking account of global interconnectivity (Shildrick and Price 2005/06), the interconnectivity of people with disabilities to technology, animals and people (Gibson 2006), exploring the self-empowerment of people with learning difficulties (Roets *et al* 2007, 2008), experiences of parenting disabled babies (Goodley 2007a, 2007b, 2009) and practices of resistance by children with profound and multiple learning difficulties (Simmons *et al.* 2008). For the purposes of this book, the approaches that interest me most are those that draw on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "Body-without-Organs" (Shildrick and Price 2005/06, Gibson 2006 and Goodley 2007a, 2007b, 2009), which (as will be outlined fully in Chapter Two) I will later suggest provides a useful concept to think about the connections between horses and riders.