‘Race’ horses – a discussion of horses and social dynamics in post-Apartheid Southern Africa.[1]

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Reading a horse’s body is like reading a text. *Learning* to read it is like learning the vocabulary of a foreign language. In this case, it is like learning to read in the vernacular, or local, morphological dialect. Horses are palimpsests, with social meanings written and rewritten across their bodies. This chapter provides a reading of the bodies of horses: reading their social lineages, their histories, and the discourses that surround them. We explore the world of contemporary horse breeding in South Africa to show how ‘race’ finds expression in equine breed designation, marketing, and discourse. The discourse surrounding southern African horse breeds and horse-ownership is explored and contextualized with a brief case-study of a southern African dog ‘breed’. The body of the horse is examined as a racialised symbol of power and site of struggle. The focus is on the post-apartheid era, but we need to trace the lineages back, to track the pedigree of power back to 1652. Animal breeding is probably the final place where purity of breed and openly eugenic discourse may be freely embraced – which opens up otherwise hidden debates. The fissures – along ethnic/ racial lines, but complicated by class and gender – in horse breeding and equestrian pursuits are discussed. This chapter is intended to contribute to our further understanding of the social experience of ‘race’ in South Africa, through the performance of ‘race’ in the practical domain of horse breeding.

This chapter is part of what has been labeled the ”animal turn” in the social sciences.[2]

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[1] I would like thank the horse breeders, owners, and experts that received me so generously in my journeys from Lesotho, to the Orange Free State, to Kwa-Zulu Natal, to the Western Cape and the Eastern Cape. Although we debate and differ on many points, they are always willing to “talk horse”. I gratefully acknowledge the financial support from the National Research Foundation. I would also like to record my thanks to my fieldworker, Graham Walker, and my indebtedness to advice from Frans van der Merwe, Bob Edgar, Malcolm Draper, Albert Grundlingh, Johan Gallant, and Eugene Terre Blanche. The advice was theirs, the blunders are my own. This article draws on work that appears in the journal *Kronos* Vol. 29, Environmental History, Special Issue, Nov. 2003 and “ ‘Horses! Give me more horses!’ – white settler society and the role of horses in the making of early modern South Africa” in Raber & Tucker (forthcoming).

[2] There are several journals that publish in this field: *Anthrozoos*, *Animal Welfare*, *Journal of Animal*

Recent historiography is beginning to explore the importance of animals in human affairs and to find that they have their own histories independent and yet revealing of human history. This new turn has been inspired by the encounter with theoretical ideas derived from social theory, cultural studies, feminism, post-colonial studies, and psychology. The "animal turn" explores the spaces which animals occupy in human society and the manner in which animal and human lives intersect, showing how diverse human factions construct a range of identities for themselves (and for others) in terms of animals. It is argued that attention should turn to the cultural meaning of non-humans in the histories, anthropologies, sociologies, and geographies – the stories – of everyday life. Such codings and transformations become closely entangled in the identity politics of human groups, with animal images and metaphors deployed to reflect human societal strata – and vice versa.

The body of the horse as symbol of power and site of struggle

The horse is not indigenous to southern Africa and African horse sickness and trypanosomiasis presented a pathogenic barrier to horses reaching the area overland.[3] The first domestic livestock to be imported by 'white' settlers, horses were integral to their identity as Europeans, used both symbolically and in a material sense to affirm 'white' difference from the indigenous population.

Horses and 'white' settlers were sent to the Cape in the same year. They were a high priority for Jan van Riebeeck, who needed them to transform the environment. To make the settlers feel more *at* home, they had to make it more *like* home – for which equine draught power was necessary. Secondly, horses (together with a pack of hunting dogs) were imported at least in part to instil fear into the KhoiKhoi and Bushmen, who were beginning to pose a threat to the settlement by raiding.[4] On 7

Ecology and *Society and Animals*. There is also a growing literature on animal histories but there is very little written on the historical human-animal connection outside of Europe and North America.

[3] African horse sickness is a serious viral disease endemic to the African continent and Trypanosomiasis is a vector-borne parasitic disease. On more general horse history see Barclay (1980); Chevenix-Trench (1992); Clutton-Brock (1992). For the early South African period see Schreuder & Wyndham (1924) and Nel (1930). For an analysis of the equine dimension of the period leading up to and during the South African war Sessions (1903) is a useful primary source. For popular reading see Burman (1993) and Child (1967).

[4] Uitgaande Briewe No. 494 1662/67 p.65. Leibrandt: *Letters Despatched vol. ii*, p.311; *Uitgaande Briewe* no.493 pp. 1098-99.

June 1660 the settler authorities used horses to demonstrate settler superiority to the Khoikhoi who were cattle-raiding:

> [T]he Commander, galloping along the near bank towards the farms of the… Free Burghers, soon disappeared from their view. His purpose was also to demonstrate the speed of the horses, which caused great awe among them.

Van Riebeeck noted with satisfaction that the local population were astonished and impressed by horses, because of the "miracles" of speed he performed with them.[5]

This is echoed by later analysis by, for example, Freud, who described the horse as symbol both of sexuality and male power. Tuchman has argued the horse has long distinguished the ruler from the ruled, with the rider a symbol of dominance (1966). Psychologists suggest that literally "looking down on others" from the back of a horse may increase feelings of pride and self-esteem (Toth 2000: 36). Horses remained a symbol of status within the evolving southern African communities. In 1820, William Bird noted that settlers who could not afford a horse in England, got a boost in status as they could afford one in the Cape (1825: 99). This phenomenon was not limited to 'white' settlers; in Sesotho, for example, there is an expression "Hopalampere", which means "to ride a horse", "to look down on others".[6] In pre-colonial west Africa, the horse was limited to the wealthy, serving as a visible symbol of wealth; usually they were specifically linked to the ruling elite (even to the exclusion of other rich individuals). Law shows that, while horses derived their status from the role in warfare, they were of symbolic importance in context where they were of little military value (1980:193). In the contemporary South African context, Eugene Terre Blanche has, for example, used the horse as symbol not only of power, but of the equine-oriented Boer past and organic masculine horsemanship, for symbolic effect within the *Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging*.[7]

There were consequently several attacks on horses; two horses were killed in July 1672, for example, by KhoiKhoi, to undermine the white power base. It is not certain whether these attacks were motivated with the intent of obliterating all horse stock, or

[5] Uitgaande Briewe No. 493, pp1098.
[6] Similarly, in Yorubaland "A man who mounts a horse has to get down" (pride comes before a fall) (Law 1980: 193).
[7] Eugene Terre Blanche to author, letter, 4 December 2003.

whether a horse acted as a proxy of 'white' settlement, being perhaps one of its most visible and vulnerable manifestations. The body of the horse was thus both a symbol of power and because of it, a site of struggle.

Horses, and other animals, have been assaulted for centuries, sometimes systematically (Yates et. al 2001).[8] Animal maiming was often undoubtedly a form of social rebellion, as in the maiming of their masters' horses by horsekeepers in England in the nineteenth century, a form of rebellion by rural labourers against the landed gentry. It was also a form of psychological terror, of symbolic murder, that resulted from personal feuds between members of the same social class. It has been argued that "animals and their bodies appear to be one site of struggle over the protection of national identity and the production of cultural difference" (Elder et. al 1998: 184). This analysis sheds lights on the recent indents of horse rapes in Gauteng. Insufficient ethnographic material has been collected to analysis this phenomenon with accuracy, but certainly the speculation exists that this could be a proxy attack on the 'white' farmers who own the horses.[9]

Horses, like other African livestock breeds, have developed in response to a wide range of climates, environmental stress, and, perhaps particularly, anthropogenic demands..In 1845 the first "scientific" description of the common horse at the Cape was offered: 14.3 hands, "brown", compact, short legged, calm, and disease resistant. For the first hundred years, the breeding stock were largely Arabian and Persian (from Sumbawa), with an injection of English thoroughbred blood from the nineteenth century. This globalised product of breed amalgamation was increasingly stamped an indigenous horse, belonging to the Cape, known variously as the "Cape horse", the "Melck" (after a well-known breeder) or the "*Bossiekop*" (Bushyhead) (Swart 2003a; Swart 2003b). The type of horse that had become to be known as the Cape horse suffered tremendous losses in the South African War (1899-1902), and subsequent

[8] In the 1990s, for example, a number of horse assaults occurred in southern England. One interpretation of these events is that they were an incursion by New Age Travellers", "Eco-Warriors", or "Refugees", insinuating themselves into the hitherto solid and respectable world of Middle England. There was concern that the perpetrator's real target was their way of life – the norms, values, and practices of the rural upper-middle class (Archer 1985. See also Beirne 1997; Elder et. al 1998; Lawrence 1984).

[9] Although it must be noted that bestiality is on the increase in South Africa apparently as a way of avoiding contracting HIV/AIDS. "NSPCA decries bestiality practice", *Mail and Guardian*, 26 March 2002.

epidemics. By 1904, an equine enthusiast, Captain Hayes pronounced the Cape Horse of fifty years before now as “extinct as the quagga” (date?: 72).

But it was not to stay “extinct”. Unlike the mustang in the American West, horses did not represent wildness or freedom. They represented (‘white’) civilisation. This was because there were no indigenous feral horses to tame, early efforts towards importation were extremely difficult, and existence in the colony was precarious. Horses were extensions of western civilisation to be nurtured and protected in order to the ‘white’ expansionist project. Horses also operated metonymically as a way of remembering the past. From the 1940s, for example, there was new interest in the ”Cape horse”, in the socio-political context of the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, manifested in social rituals like the Great Trek Centenary Celebrations, and leading up to the 1948 Nationalist victory.

For the first time in the 1940s, the “boerperd” (literally either “farm horse” or “horse of the Boers [or Afrikaans-speakers]”, a significant but lost etymological distinction) was not seen as simply a category for any animal rejected from other breeds. There was a new desire to use a “breeding policy” to fix the “conformation and stamina” which made the boerhorse renowned during the South African War. So, in 1949, a decision was made to create four societies (Arabs, American saddle horse, National Riding horse and the thoroughbreds), with calls for ‘centralisation’ for ‘progressive thinking’.

The first Boerperd trials were held from 1955. The wool boom, facilitated by American contracts during their Korean War, promoted upward mobility and leisured affluence in Afrikaans-speaking society, particularly in the Cape, with a concomitant change in consumption patterns. Concurrently, the utilitarian farm horse was supplanted by the pleasure horse (Saddlers, from America, are show horses; they are utilized in elite specific equestrian pursuits, being very showy, requiring expensive special farrier work, and limited in usefulness for ordinary hacking or farm work). The wool boom further promoted the American link, which helps explain why American saddlers proved popular. Programmes were initiated to cross “Boerperd” with American Saddler (in particular the five-gaited Saddlers from Kentucky, Tennessee). In 1973, a splinter group, uneasy about additional American blood,

started producing a strain descended directly from the "Cape horses", "introduced into the two Boer republics during the Great Trek"[10] Consequently, in 1977, the society renamed the breed the "Historical Boerperd" and later, in 1998, "The South African Boerperd" in keeping with a discourse of nation-building. Meanwhile, a splinter group wanted to use more Saddler blood , developing what came to be known as the Cape Boerperd. In 1996, the Department of Agriculture formally accepted the Historical Boerperd (with approximately 2000 registered horses). Thus boerperd with a small "b" became Boerperd with a capital letter, because of a particular kind of identity politics.

Several themes are emphasized in the definition and marketing of the Boerperd. Firstly, history and heritage are underscored (with, for example, assertions that General De Wet's famous grey Arab was a "Boerperd"; and slogans like "The horse from the Past for the Future"); they included the idea of an organic, ethnically essentialist notion that the "Boers were good and natural horseman". This includes efforts towards establishing the boer commando riding style as a judgeable event for shows. Afrikaans horse names, military victories, generals' horses' names are often used; the phrases used in marketing these horse include: "their ancestors carried the Voortrekkers" and they provide a link to " 'white' civilization" ("The SA Boerperd is as old as civilization in South Africa.").[11] Secondly, there is an elite group patrolling the borders of the breed, an aristocracy (like the Burgers, Conradies, Grimbeecks) acting as breeders, judges, inspectors – often in overlapping roles.[12] Thirdly, there are six distinct bloodlines, and, since 31 December 1999, the register of the Cape Boerperd has been closed to "outside" horses.[13] The second and third traits contain a measure of irony as they are at odds with the simultaneous insistence on the

[10] http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses/boer/. See also Kaapse / Cape Boerperd Breeders Society, http://www.capeboerperd.co.za/boerperd_breeders.htm and SA Boerperd, http://studbook.co.za/society/boerperd/boer.html

[11] http://www.ansi.okstate.edu/breeds/horses/boer/index.htm.

[12] There is fierce antipathy towards to the Cape Boerperd from the SA or Historical Boerperd breeders.

[13] http://www.capeboerperd.co.za/boerperd_breeders.htm The Kaapse/ In 1999 the Cape Boerperd was declared a developed breed. All foals from registered parents are recorded in the foal register. At the age of 3 years all foals are inspected by a panel of three inspectors before such a horse can be recorded in the Kaapse/ Cape Boerperd register. The Eggo or Cloete horse (or Eggo-Boerperd) from WJ Cloete in Molteno in the Eastern Cape; the Van Niekerk or A2, started by Albert van Niekerk in 1879 in Wakkerstroom, eastern Transvaal/ Mpumalanga); the Odendaal line from Kestell in the Free State, the Hancke horse from Bethal, Mpumalanga; Steenkamp horses from Ermelo, Mpumumalanga and the Namib horse are what?

ordinariness, the everyday quality, and the naturalness of the Boerperd's ancestry Fourthly, the horses are promoted as autochthonous and 'authentic', with the slogan: "Geselekteer en Aangepas vir Afrika" [Selected for and Adapted to Africa])[14] It remains a space where purity of breed, and explicitly eugenic discourse is accepted, insisting on the purity of the six bloodlines.

Blood horses

Blood inundates the horsewoman's vocabulary: "warmblood", "coldblood", "blood purity", "bloodstock", "bloodweeds", and "bloodhorse". In identifying horses, one may use both blood typing and DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) testing. Blood typing is a laboratory procedure that tests blood for the presence or absence of certain blood proteins. In equids, seven blood proteins are recognized, labeled A, C, D, K, P, Q, and U.[15] Many breed registries require horses to be tested and their profiles registered. Further blood profiling is offered by the more sophisticated and expensive option of DNA testing. DNA testing uses blood, tissue, hair, semen, and saliva samples. There are two variations: either SLPs (single locus probes), which locate a single segment of repetitive DNA at a single site on a single chromosome (hereditary material within a cell), or MLPs (multiple locus probes), which find multiple repetitive DNA segments on multiple chromosomes. Simply put, a horse has 64 chromosomes,[16] each containing genetic directives for the horse's traits. Except for identical twins, no two animals will share a pattern (Bailey et. al 1995; Georges & Andersson 1995; Sakagami et. al 1995).

Gene jockeys

The Horse Genome Project is similar to the human genome programme.[17] However, unlike the latter project, designed to completely sequence the human genome, the

[14] Emphasis is being placed on the few horses imported into the Cape from the United States in 1782 and 1808, while ignoring the enormous saddlebred impact from 1950s.

[15] Their various permutations offer about 125 million different blood "profiles", rendering the likelihood of two horses sharing a profile extremely unlikely.

[16] Except for the Przewalski's horse, with its 66 chromosomes; when cross bred, the resulting foals have 65 chromosomes.

[17] The International Equine Gene Mapping Workshop began in 1995 and is conducted by the Dorothy Russell Havemeyer Foundation. In 1997 the Horse Technical Committee of the National Research Sponsored Projects of the United States Department of Agriculture National Animal Genome Research Program was formed. These programs work in concert to foster international collaboration in the field of horse genomics. See K. S. Herbert, *The Horse: Your Guide to Equine Health Care*, Vol XII, No. 12, December, 1995.

horse mapping effort is directed at the simpler task of identifying landmarks on chromosomes and creating a framework for studying horse genes. Recent developments in genetic marker testing provide the prospect of tests for breed identity (for example, Bjørnstad & Røed 2001: 59). While DNA testing may be used to identify the parents of any given foal, the work has not been done which would allow breed identification. Identification of parentage by DNA is a simple matter and is easily confused as *breed* identification. DNA is not required for the identification of a breed, which demonstrates that this is not only a biological but a political issue, as illustrated by the following case-study of the Basotho pony.

The "ox that deceives" – the meanings of the "Basotho pony"[18]

In 1995, Nelson Mandela paid a state visit to King Moshoeshoe II of the mountain kingdom of Lesotho. Among the honours and ceremonial gifts received by Mandela was a dappled grey stallion.[19] This award was given as an icon of the BaSotho people, symbolising their culture and historical identity.

Similarly, the literature on eco- and cultural- tourism is redolent of the romance of the ponies. The refrains "the BaSothos are a nation of horsemen", they are "natural horsemen" and their ponies are "integral to the landscape" are entrenched – apparent in the popular imagination, repeated in advertisements, travel literature, and represented on their banknotes. Aside from its still primary role in rural transport, particularly in the highlands, the horse has seeped into cultural references: the idioms *Ho ya perere* ("eat the horse, i.e. the forbidden, to break a taboo") and *Kepèrè entso* ("he is a black horse" – he is strange, maybe dangerous). Horses have appeared in

[18] My thanks to my field-worker, Graham Walker and the participants at the International Conference on forest and environmental history of the British Empire and Commonwealth, University of Sussex, March 2003, for this section of the chapter. This part of the study draws on initial oral history findings [initially draws on?], but "*Petsane e gola kago amusa"*, "a foal only grows by suckling". I have used SeSotho (instead of South African) orthography: SeSotho refers to language and customs; MoSotho is a person; BaSotho refers to people, Lesotho refers to the country and LeSotho refers to the nation. I have used the term 'Basotho pony', but it is often commonly referred to as 'Basuto pony'.

[19] ANC Daily News Briefing, Thursday 13 July 1995 @ MANDELA-HORSE MASERU July 13 SAPA. The Lesotho monarch, who owns several racing horses, presented Mandela with the gift from the royal stable. The gift was made at the royal palace in Maseru after Mandela, Lesotho Prime Minister Ntsu Mokhehle and the king met. Accepting the gift, Mandela said: "This reminds me of my younger days when I was a shepherd."

myths and worked themselves into the cosmological weave (Savory 1962).[20] They permeate material culture and ritual, as evidenced in, for example, the *Lechoba* – bracelets of horse hair in the *mohobelo* men's dance – or the still-popular horse races.

So we must look briefly at the social meanings that have come to be encoded in the pony and equally how they play themselves out in terms of 'race'. To understand the current significance, the development of the Basotho pony must be traced, exploring its anthropogenic-natural selection as well as colonial scientific breed improvement, Secondly, we must explore the social impact of the animal that is still used as a symbol of (male) national identity.[21]

SeSotho-speaking people have lived in Southern Africa since the 10th century AD, roaming throughout the highveld. By the 16th century, groups had arrived in the region known now as Lesotho, intermingling with the Khoisan people and establishing small chiefdoms. By the early 19th century, white traders and the *Voortrekkers* (Boer pioneers) began encroaching. Communities within the nation coming to be known as BaSotho recognised the external threat and the internal pressure on the environment. The loosely organised southern Sotho groups' survival may be attributed to the leadership of King Moshoeshoe, who consolidated and amalgamated those scattered by Zulu raids (Eldredge 1993). In 1830 another military force entered the arena occupied by the Sotho: a group, variously identified as the Hottentots, Griquas, Bastards, Kora – with an estimated two thousand men in the field, living largely on plunder, particularly stock theft (Engelbrecht 1936). They were mounted on "good horses" (who had acquired their largely "oriental" stock from white Cape farmers on the borders of the Orange River) (Tylden 1950: 9). The original SeSotho for horse is *khomo-ea-haka* or "cattle called haka" ("hacqua" being the Khoi name for a horse) (Kolbe 1731-1738: 33).[22] There is no original word in SeSotho for "horse" and the word in widespread use by 1950 and in official usage

[20] Horses are understandably absent from the older myths and legends (see Jacottet 1908; Postma 1964, 1974).

[21] There is no historical or contemporary role of the horse among women, it was and remains strictly a male preserve; in *Basali! Stories by and about women in Lesotho* (Limakatso Kendall 1995) other animals, but not horses, are mentioned. Gendered horse ownership in Lesotho focuses a useful lens onto the current feminisation of equestrianism currently the dominant discourse in the west, particularly Anglophone countries.

[22]* *Cape Quarterly Review*, January 1882, p.273 "khomohaka", the "deceiver ox" (without horns).

today is *pere*, a close derivative of the Afrikaans word *perd*. The BaSotho acquired their first horses from raiding the Kora and Griqua from the early 1830s, and their king systematically acquired them thereafter.[23]

Significant evidence of their social value lies in the fact that horses were not private property. Their re-sale was controlled by chiefs and supreme ownership was vested in the community. Horses proved indispensable in repelling mounted raiders and there was a rapid acquisition of stock,[24] soon supplementing acquisition with breeding.[25] By 1903 every male adult was mounted, although women did not adopt the custom.[26] By the latter half of the 1880s, ponies spread to the cultural domain, with pony racing becoming a popular pasttime.[27] From 1830 to 1850 imported stock was largely small "Cape horses". In the second wave of acquisitions, from 1835 to 1840, there was predominately similar stock (with little thoroughbred blood), while from 1840 to 1870 there was a greater amount of thoroughbred blood..[28]

As the SeSotho proverb goes, "All countries are frontiers": the border was porous and the stock acquired was highly various. By 1870, the whole (male) nation was mounted (with re-sale controlled to an extent by the chief). Imports stopped and exportation began, so that by 1901 the export of horses accounted for 73% of export market value.[29] During the South Africa War (1899-1902), the BaSotho sold their ponies to British remount officers and to the Boer forces.[30] These hardy ponies proved useful: they were of small body size (14-14.2 hands) and able to forage for themselves. This was due to anthropogenic and natural selection: Basutoland (Lesotho) was a harsh environment. It would appear that the BaSotho were good horsemen, but bad horse owners: little shelter, food or veterinary treatment were provided and, added to that,

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[23] Eldredge, *South African Kingdom*, p.26. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto*, 195; Sanders, *Moshoeshoe*, p.46. Ellenberger, *History of the Basuto*, 195. See also Thornton; Grobbelaar, 133; Malan, 14; Hook, 300; De Kok, 160.

[24] Eldredge, *A South African Kingdom*, p.147.

[25] *Livre d'Or*, p.450, 451. By 1861 there was a significant increase, by 1875 the Census states the BaSotho had 35 357 horses. By 1891, they had 81 194.Fredoux, 27 December 1861, JME (1862) quoted in Eldridge, p.71; *BBNA*, 1876; census returns in *Leselinyana*.

[26] Minnie Martin, *Basutoland – its legends and customs* (London: Nichols, 1903) p.40.

[27] G. Tylden, *The Rise of the Basuto* (Cape Town: Juta, 1950) p.118.

[28] A myth existed that the hardy little ponies must have been descended from Shetland ponies stolen from British settlers. The Assistant Commissioner went so far as to dismiss the claims publicly S. Barrett, *The Field*, July 1901.

[29] E. Eldridge, *A South African Kingdom – the pursuit of security in nineteenth century Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 160.

[30] B.C. Judd, "With the C.M.R", *Nongquai*, June 1938.

the cold, little forage and precipitous environment led to development of these small, resilient horses with their famously high endurance.

Photograph from the Remount Commission, Basotho pony, c.1902[31]

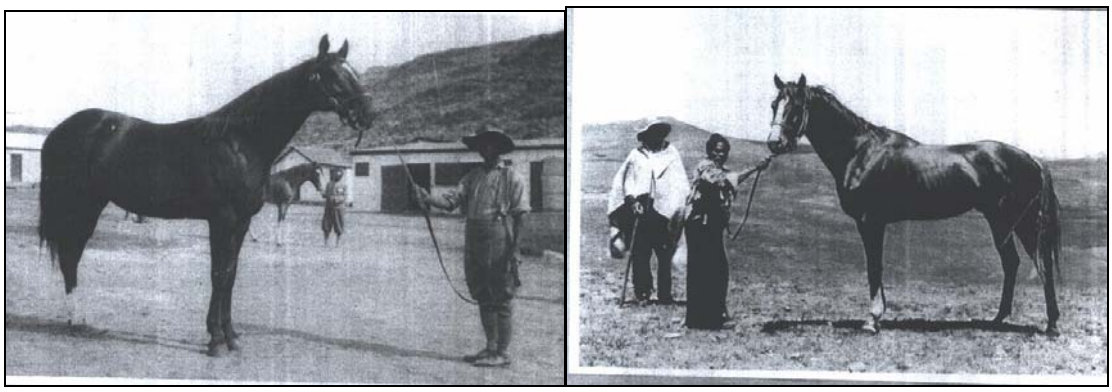
Significantly, by the early years of the twentieth century there appears to have been widespread consensus that the Basotho pony had enough individuality to be classified as a "distinct type".[32] There were repeated colonial attempts to improve the breed. Between 1903 and 1905, the Resident Commissioner imported seven Arab stallions and offered free stud services. Between 1907 and 1932 mainly thoroughbred blood was introduced. There were problems after the South African War in encouraging local use of the government stud. It is not an isolated or unprecedented problem. There is a tantalizing whisper of early nationalist and identity politics played through the horse as symbol, or indeed as metonym for 'tradition'. There were reports of "anti-progressive" BaSotho raising an "outcry" against the efforts of the Government to improve the Basotho pony. They maintained that their ponies were more suitable, more surefooted and enduring, and refused to be part of the breeding programme, contending that they did not need European imports – that the "indigenous" was better. Tylden observes the political agenda behind such agricultural programmes as inducement for the BaSotho

> to see the sense of adopting modern methods; their health and their

[31] H. Sessions, *Two years with Remount Commission* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1903), 215.
[32] J.M. Christy, *Transvaal Agricultural Journal*, 1908; P.J. Schreuder, 'The Cape Horse', PHD, Cornell University, 1915, p.101.

> horseflesh – the latter, after their firearms, their most precious possessions – providing most suitable targets. People who had benefited by the white man's medicine, had seen colts from the Government stallions… were, at any rate, not indisposed to listen to what white experts in other lines had to tell them.[33]

A mixture of thoroughbred and Arab studs were widely used between 1900 and 1930.[34] By 1936, R.W. Thornton contended that the Basotho pony was utterly debased and required saving, a process that continued sporadically under the Equine Breed Improvement Scheme.[35] By 1966 there were an estimated 90 000 horses in BaSotholand, only 10% being of the now almost non-existent "true BaSotho type".



Stallions (clearly English Thoroughbred stock) introduced by Equine Improvement Scheme, C.1937.[36]

In 1980 the Lesotho government set up the Basotho pony centre,[37] establishing government-run, NGO-funded stud farms specifically to "maintain the Basotho pony as a satisfactory mode of transport for the rural population", to develop the export market, to improve extension services to farmers, and generally improve the farmers' horse stock. Selection criteria included "pedigree", "uniformity of type", together with materially beneficial things like stamina, tripling ability (an ambling lope), conformation and fertility (McCormack 1991: 201). The state established a national

[33] Tylden, *The Rise of the Basuto*, 208.
[34] Tylden, 219.
[35] National Archives, Public Record Office, London, DO119/1096.
[36] National Archives, Public Record Office, London, DO119/1096. [*Do you have permission to print these pics? Not yet*]
[37] Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Basotho pony Project, 1 July 1977 (Maseru) Lesotho Treaty List, no.5 of 1980, 22.
[39] J.L. Lush, *The genetics of populations* (Mimeo, 1948); see 'From Jay L. Lush to Genomics: Visions for Animal Breeding and Genetics', May 1999, Iowa State University.

stud farm, containing a nucleus herd allocated to a Livestock Improvement Centre, where farmers could bring their mares to be serviced by a "registered improved stallion". Secondly, mare camps were set up to control their breeding. An equine extension service was offered, focusing on aspects of equine husbandry and nutrition. Endurance and triple racing was promoted as a sport in lieu of simply racing.

The Basotho pony has no written stud-books and no written pedigrees. Although, internationally, it is much better known than any other Southern African "breed" arguably because of its involvement in the remount trade, there is no historical record of its breeding. This raises questions of autochthony and the creation of historical myth or the 'invention of tradition'. Does the Basotho pony exist? What does it *mean* to say it existed? If between 1870-90 (its numerical zenith and the high point of its popularity) and 1902 (when the authorities discovered the need to save it), a 'breed' existed (or at least, a particular morphological type), why would one wish to preserve it in the amber of that historical moment? Moreover, it must be further asked which admixtures are acceptable: what is the difference between breed *improvement* and breed *submerging*? Equally, there is an internal contradiction. In essence the historical success and survival of the pony type which it is desirable to 'save' is the one that developed over time to be best suited for its environment. However, now there is an insistence on changing previous breeding regimes and a requirement of centralised anthropogenic intervention in order to artificially maintain – indeed, 'bring back' and then 'preserve' this breed. Why did the natural environment cease producing the kind of stock required?

The term 'breed' is hard to define. A 'breed' may be understood as a group of animals that, through selection, have come to resemble one another and pass their qualities to their offspring. All this means that a breed is a population that complies to ancestry. So a 'purebred' animal belongs to an identifiable breed complying with prescribed traits – origin, appearance, and minimum breed standards. As Lush has contended in *The Genetics of Populations* the term is both elusive and subjective:

> [a] breed is a group of domestic animals, termed such by common consent of the breeders… a term which arose among breeders of livestock, created one might say, for their own use, and no one is warranted in assigning to this word a scientific definition and in calling the breeders wrong when they deviate from the formulate definition.[39]

So the point at which a collection of animals becomes a ‘breed’ is a purely commercial or sentimental decision – not a genetic event.[40] This has obvious parallels with human races and their classifications; biological variability exists but it does not conform to racial categories developed by society, largely from the eighteenth century. It is widely accepted that human ’races’ are far from natural and are in fact socially produced and shifting, but animal breeds are often a safe realm for those narratives onto which conceptions of human difference such as hierarchy, gender, class, and national character are mapped [Humans cannot be classified accurately into clearly delineated and biologically distinct groups.[41] The amount of genetic variation between different groups of humans is very low overall, and a number of arbitrary groups can be formed based on various criteria. Particular phenotypic traits (like skin colour) are highlighted in typecasting individuals along public views of ‘race’, a practice which provides little practical information. This is not to state that there is no biological variation between different populations of people, just that the biological distinctions are much more opaque than contained in common ideas of ‘race’.[42] The reliance on race as a biological concept serves a powerful politico-social purpose by creating an immutable difference between peoples. In recent years attempts have also been made to evaluate genotypic differences to justify biological ‘races’. These attempts have sought to define clusters of characteristics in one population that are lacking in other populations. These clusters supposedly would enable different populations to be divided into distinct ‘races’. Such attempts have failed, however, and what researchers have found is that biological variations exist on a cline rather than in delimited geographic clusters with gaps in between.[43] So, the idea of distinct ‘races’ defined by rigid differences has fallen apart as anthropologists have studied the genetic and physical characteristics of human populations.

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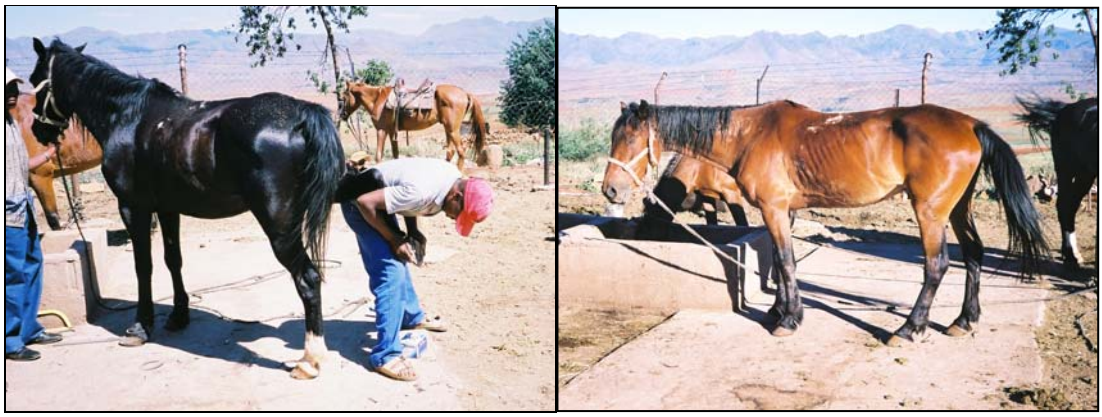
[40] There are about 150 internationally accepted “breeds” of horses in the world, all belonging to the species, *Equus caballus.*

[41] Skull measurements, for example, vary widely not only within communities but even during a person's lifetime.

[42] Although anthropologists thus no longer classify populations in terms of races, they do recognize that human populations exhibit diverse phenotypes. Ancestral phenotypes are suites of traits that are associated with geographic populations.

[43] A cline, as defined by anthropologists, means a gradual change of a trait and its frequency from one place to another within a species or population (usually corresponding to a transition in environment across a species’ geographic range). Any boundary marked along the continuum is therefore arbitrary.

In the horse world it is simple to form a 'breed': all one needs is paperwork. One registers the 'breed' with the appropriate authorities and promulgates a breed standard. One does not need a lawyer, a threshold number, genetic material or even a horse.



Striking phenological divergence of Basotho pony 'types', Malealea, 2003.[44]

There is also another complication to this idea of 'breed' which opens a further dimension of the politics and paradoxes of animal breeding. In 1950, a committee was set up by the South African Secretary for Agriculture, Dr C.H. Neveling, to investigate indigenous breeds of sheep, cattle, goats and so on that were of interest to Afrikaner culture brokers. This was catalysed by a 1949 letter from a far-flung extension officer, AW Lategan, on a distant isolated station in the Northern Cape, who pointed out that, while there was much effort towards soil conservation, indigenous animals well adapted to local conditions were disappearing.[45] The Department of Agriculture subsequently bought twelve representative animals, interestingly not from Lesotho, but from the Orange Free State, and established a breeding station at Nooitgedacht in Ermelo (Mpumalanga) to "preserve the Basotho pony" and to develop a utility riding horse.[46] It was called the "Nooitgedacht" pony ostensibly because of the breeders' admixture of Cape horse/ Boerperd and Arab blood.[47] This is an unconvincing rationalization, as the Basotho pony was itself

[44] Malealea, December 2003 by the author, with permission of the owners.
[45] 'Conservation of Early Domesticated Animals of Southern Africa', Conference proceedings, Willem Prinsloo Agricultural Museum, 3-4 March 1994.
[46] F. van der Merwe and J. Martin, "Four Southern African Horse Breeds". Unpublished paper. My thanks for a copy of this paper.
[47] F. van der Merwe 1995.

developed from Arab and Cape horse/ Boerperd amalgamation. The more plausible rationale is that the South African horse market of the time was unwilling to acquire 'native' stock. A studbook was kept open for females who passed a phenotypic inspection (small Boerperd or Arab). Interestingly, the breeders permitted admixture from Afrikaner breeds, but specifically no British pony breeds were allowed. In 1969 the Breed Society was founded (and changed the name from "pony" to "horse" for commercial reasons) with a preference for greys (a trait not linked to Basuto ponies). In 1976, the South African Studbook recognised the Nooitgedacht (invented a mere 24 years before) as its first indigenous breed and sold it at public auctions and gave stock to preserve to the Universities of Pretoria and Stellenbosch. The horses are celebrated as indigenous and autochthonous: "Thanks to the continued dedication of the breeders, the future of the Nooitgedachter breed is secure. South Africa can justly be proud of this noble and loyal horse",[48] and is part of a "proud South African heritage...".[49] The Nooitgedacht Horse Breeders' Society states:

> After more than forty years of scientific breeding, dedication and preservation, the Nooitgedachter is one of South Africa's truly indigenous horse breeds, descended from the original Cape horse. Probably one of the rarest horse breeds in the world, it is the worthy descendant of the Basotho pony, a symbol of tradition and a proud heritage for future generations.[50]

This may be analysed in terms of "hybridity", a term linked with both creolisation and liminality, with the crossovers of identities generated by colonialism.[51] Young reminds us that the hybrid is technically a cross between two different species and that therefore the term hybridisation evokes both the notion of inter-species grafting and the "vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right", which regarded different races as different species (Young 1995: 10). However, in post-colonial theory, hybridity is intended to suggest all those ways in which this vocabulary was challenged. Even as imperial and racist ideologies insist on racial difference, they catalyse crossovers, partly because not all that happens in the contact zones can be controlled, but occasionally also as a result of deliberate colonial policy. Examples of calculated

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[48] http://www.orusovo.com/weissenfels/nooitgedacht.htm.
[49] http://www.nooitgedacht.com/nootie_heritage.htm.
[50] Nooitgedacht Horse Breeders' Society, http://www.sa-breeders.co.za/org/nooitgedachter/
[51] A. Loomba 1998.
[54] It is generally accepted that dogs were domesticated during the hunter-gatherer period in human history, about 12 000 years ago and were well established by the time agricultural villages began to form, 6 000 years ago in the Fertile Crescent. See F.E. Zeuner 1963, J. Clutton-Brock 1989, and L. Corbett, 1995.

(colonial) policy used to manipulate cultural outcomes by the means of hybridisation include the "colonial education policies which aimed to create Europeanised natives, or to use Macaulay's words, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals and intellect" (Loomba 1998: 173). Similarly, it may be argued that the Nooitgedacht was *Basotho* in body, *Afrikaans* in identity.

The breed debate reflects the politics of autochthony and the invention of what is 'traditional' and underlines the manner in which 'to race' may be enacted as a performance. At the turn of the twentieth century, the debate pivoted around the need to import horses to improve the debased, small, degenerate colonial stock. By the mid century mark, and escalating to a peak in 1980, it revolved around the need to preserve or even revive the proud, autochthonous colonial horse for reasons bound up in sentiment, history, nostalgia, heritage, and commerce. This perceived need was so great that NGOs and government funding was directed into programmes in Lesotho, while at the same time an entirely new 'breed' was invented in South Africa in order to preserve the 'heritage' of the Basotho pony. The body of the horse acted as a site of struggle in the protection of national identity and the production of cultural difference.

Ostensibly neutral taxonomic classifications and breed descriptions provide a lens through which to view the economic and cultural developments within post-aparthied South Africa.. There is a direct parallel with attempts to preserve, or at least conserve, the Africanis dog (Swart 2003: 190-206).[54] The "Canis Africanis" has been previously dismissed as merely a "kaffir dog".[55] These latter dogs, predominately present in rural areas throughout Southern Africa, are argued to share traits – they are predominately smooth-coated, lightly built, with a slight forehead stop and pointed muzzle, large semi-pricked ears and a curled tail. Historically, these dogs have not been classified as a 'breed' – unlike Rhodesian Ridgebacks or Boerboels, both lines arising in Africa but predominately developed within white settler society. Instead they have been considered pariah, and been labelled disparagingly as "pi/pye-dogs", curs, or "shenzi dogs" (from the Swahili meaning "wild'".[56] More recently, ideas about the status of

[55] "Kaffir dog", an offensive term, is still used in some communities, and is often shortened to 'KD'.

[56] Recently there has been a re-investigation into their taxonomic status and an argument has been made that they are not mongrel progeny of settler dogs, but derived from the Arabian wolf (*Canis lupus arabs*), from which Middle Eastern dogs were domesticated, arriving in southern Africa c.1 000 – 1 500 BC with Arab traders, Early Iron Age Bantu (Nguni-speakers) and/or Khoi pastoralists.

the Africanis dog are wrapped up in the ideology of reclaiming the indigenous, the autochthonous, and building on indigenous knowledge systems. Such claims have been generated by post-colonial conditions and the perceived scorn of the first world for the third. "Indigenous knowledge" claims autonomy and independence from "metropolitan knowledge".[57] The Africanis dogs are increasingly argued to be part of the living heritage of African culture and are celebrated as part of the African Renaissance, "our cultural and biological patrimony".[58] They are marketed as symbols of the value of the indigenous, simultaneously promoting and using the social sense of worth that is a key element of the African Renaissance. The Africanis breeders note: "The Africanis is the real African dog – shaped in Africa, for Africa. It is part of the cultural and biological heritage of Africa… But is it a mongrel or dog of no definable type or breed? Decidedly not! Africanis is the true dog of Africa…"[59] The dogs are thus imagined and marketed as creatures linked to their terrain, and part of an African "traditional way of life".[60] However, the breed is advertised in the modern western way on the internet and in the global capitalist manner.[61]

Just as for horses, DNA fingerprinting does not allow scientists to identify dog 'breeds'.[62] There is a massive capital invested in the (horse and dog) breeding industry. Both breeders and the resultant service industries benefit from the public's enthusiasm for 'purebred' animals, preferably registered. There are several parallels to the South African context in other post-colonial situations, where animals are used as socio-cultural vehicles to promote a sense of self-respect, or – inversely – current cultural ideology is used to market formerly low-priced livestock.[63]

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[57] It is, to use current South African and pan-African terminology, an attempt at "Renaissance" – to recover "old" ways of understanding and to restore lost or forgotten ways of doing and thinking. See, for example, M.W. Makgoba (ed.) 1999, T. Mbeki 1998, and M. M. Mulemfo 2000.
[58] Johan Gallant, pers. Comm.. See also J. Gallant 2002.
[59] http://www.sa-breeders.co.za/org/africanis/
[60] K.A. Ramsay, D.S. Reed, A.J. Bothma, J.M. Lepen 1994.
[61] http://www.sa-breeders.co.za/org/africanis/
[62] Raymond Coppinger has stated there has not been discovered an incontrovertible genetic marker for breeds of dogs. R. Coppinger, pers. comm. For the moment, the final diagnostic process requires papers like those lodged with kennel clubs, like the KUSA or AKC, or educated guesses based on a dog's morphology and behaviour.
[63] Animals are used as signifiers in an attempt to boost post-colonial pride in indigenous identity. The singing dogs of New Guinea, Korean Jindo or Australian dingo (*Canis familiaris dingo*), for example, are increasingly argued to be 'breeds' in their own right. The dingo, for example, is currently celebrated as 'part of the living heritage of aboriginal culture and part of Australian history'. The Jindo of Korea has been described recently as 'one of the Korean natural monuments', around 'from time unknown'. C.G. Lee, J.I.Lee, C.Y Lee, and S.S. Sun 2000: 381-389.

A one-horse Race?

Horses were the first animals to be imported to southern Africa, and came to be integral to European settler society, used symbolically and in a material sense to affirm white difference from the indigenous population. A 'breed' of horse, which became known as the Cape horse, was developed, invested with the anxieties and pride of settler society. Natural and social history of horse and human became entangled as humans shaped that species and it shaped our cultures. The horse was manipulated as a signifier of difference, a marker of social status. It was used to emphasise both the difference between native and settler and the difference between settler and metropole. The horse was a symbol of power – and hence became a victim. Unlike in the settler context in the Americas, the horse was not a symbol of wildness,[64] but, rather, tameness, of civilization, and of white settlement. There was no basis to re-enact the subduing of the wilderness and the transformation from 'nature' to 'culture' that anthropologists and historians have uncovered, for example, in the western display of rodeo.[65]

'Difference' is enacted through differentiated horse bodies, through management regimes like selective breeding, shows, and breed registries. Narratives are constructed in which conceptions of human difference such as hierarchy, gender, class and national character are mapped onto these bodies. The trajectory of the Boerperd's development shows an inextricable link between 'breed' designation and the politics of identity formation, pivoting most latterly on recovering the autochthonous in the landscape of the New South Africa. Similarly, in the despised "Kaffir dog's" redemption as valuable "Africanis dog", lie embedded ideas and metaphors central to the African Renaissance and heritage creation. This finds a parallel in the shift in perception from considering the Basotho pony to be in need of improvement to considering it to be in need of preservation. From the time the Sotho overcame socio-political and economic hurdles and acquired their first horse, they re-invented

[64] The tamed mounts transported by the Spanish to the Americas assumed a feral state in the New World and developed into the 'mustang'.

[65] See, for example, Elizabeth Lawrence, 'Rodeo Horses: the wild and the tame', in R. Willis, *Signifying Animals – human meaning in the natural world* (London: Routledge, 1990) p223 and more extensively E.A. Lawrence, *Rodeo: an anthropologist looks at the wild and the tame*. Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press. See also Richard Slata, *Cowboys of the Americas* (Yale University Press, 1990).

themselves as an equine society. Within a mere two decades, they had transformed Sotho material culture, defence capability, gender identity and social structure. The very sense of what it meant to be an adult BaSotho male was transformed: they were *horsemen*. The Basotho pony has become a corporeal icon of nationhood, and, as such, has become embedded in the politics of identity politics and invented traditions.

Horses, like humans, are products of both biology and culture, yet it is human culture that defines a horse's condition, its status and its position (Schwartz 1997: 30). Hybridity is admitted as a facet of the distant past but vehemently denied in the recent past. For example, breeders concede American infusion in 1782 and 1808 but deny its influence in the 1950s and 60s.[67] Horse (and dog) 'breeds' are clearly creolised, but their creolisation is often vehemently denied for reasons ranging from nostalgia, to nationalism and commerce. A history is invented for them, emphasising their autochthony and purity. Behind every breed we find an ethnography and a social history as well as a genealogy – its cultural, as well as its genetic, heritage. Breeds are just as much a result of societal decision as 'races', not a genetic event. Breeds and their discourses reflect on society's thinking about the status of race (like the change of taxonomy between Basotho pony and Nooitgedacht). Self-identity (and identity as relational or indeed oppositional to other groups) is reflected in discourses surrounding horse breeds.[68] It must be remembered that there is nothing 'mere' about invented traditions[69] and 'breeds' cannot be dismissed, for all their social construction. The process of invention is an important part of social identity, and the (genetic, biological, and commercial) practicalities of breeding. We should acknowledge the corporeality of the horses and the dedication of the communities (virtual and material) in pursuing their agendas; often difficult work, not to be lightly dismissed.

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[67] F. van der Merwe, pers. comm.. See I. Hofmeyr "Unravelling the blood-knot: SA's horse breeds", http:// www.hjcentral.com/information/articles/thearticles/Breeds/breed6.html.

[68] It is not true solely of race but also of class and gender. For example, breed improvement schemes of the nineteenth century tended to focus exclusively on the pedigree of the stallion, dismissing the mare as merely a womb with a view, with no impact on the 'breeding' of the progeny. Similarly, mares were scorned as riding and racing horses, dismissed as riding horses for Africans and fillies often not broken in. Women and horses were emancipated in the same century, one by leaving the work force, the other by entering it. In the west, equine activity is approximately 80% women, and mares have been reclaimed as racing and riding horses.

[69] See E. Hobsbawm and T.Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge University Press, 1983, 1997).

The ironies and complications of the historical myth of the pure bred may be seen by returning to the vignette of Nelson Mandela being presented with the Basotho pony. This symbol of the BaSotho Nation, the pony, donated by Moshoeshoe II himself, was the material embodiment of the nation and symbol of the nation's pride; but the horse itself was an (American) Appaloosa half-breed.

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